The Magazine for Golden Age & Silver Age Collectors!

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

No. 34
April 1995

Batman © 1995 DC

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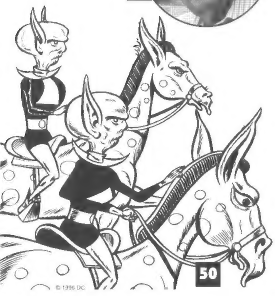

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BATMAN AND ROBIN survey the vast expanse of their underground lair... the Batcave! Steeped in legend and Gotham City lore, the contents of the Batcave have been a closely guarded secret known only to a few... until now! Legendary artist Dick Sprang has unleashed his talent and imagination in the new "Secrets of the Batcave" lithograph, a project that is being hailed by Golden Age and Silver Age fans everywhere.

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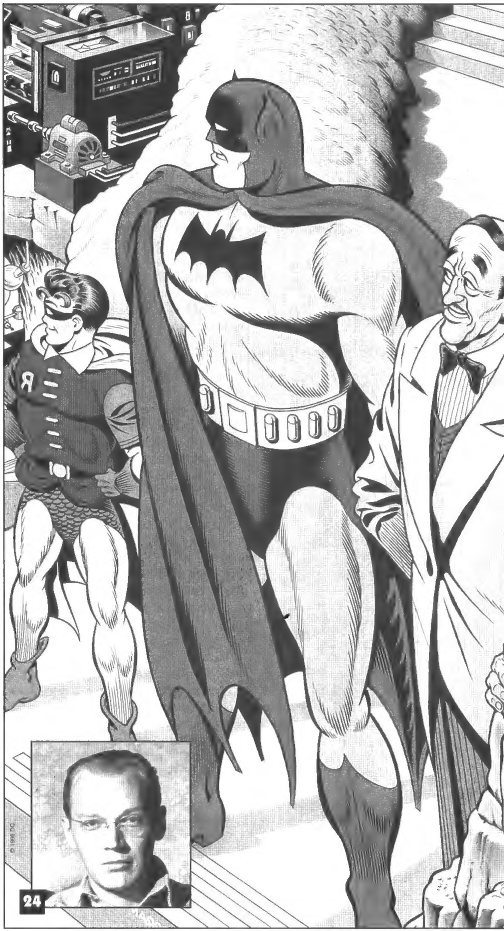
Issue Number #34, April 1996



GRADING SYMPOSIUM

About ten years ago (or so) my brother, several local collectors, and I batted around an idea during the slow periods of the San Diego Comic Book Convention (remember when there were slow periods at the Con?) We all thought that some sort of group discussion or forum focusing on the topic of comic book grading would be useful and instructive… an arena where any and all interested parties could attend and contribute questions and comments to a group supported panel discussion. Ideally, the panel and the audience would represent a broad cross-section of geographic locations as well as grading viewpoints. An event like that might even further the development, understanding, and standardization of this often controversial component of our hobby.

Now, at long last… after more than a decade, numerous discussions, and a long string of earnest but failed attempts… it's finally going to happen. That's right, I'm proud to publicly announce the first "National Comic Book Grading Symposium" is approved and scheduled as an official event at the San Diego Comic Con, held this year July 4-7, 1996. The credit for finally putting the Symposium together goes to none other than CBM copy editor Beth Holley, who has taken up this challenge in her capacity as a San Diego Con Vice President. We all owe Beth a debt of gratitude for this effort.

Four of the seven Grading Symposium panel members have been confirmed as of this writing, and it looks like a spirited discussion is a sure thing. The confirmed panel of presenters so far includes yours truly, Dr. Pat Kochanek, Keith Contarino, and Robert Roter. These three names are likely familiar to *CBM* readers, because each has contributed articles, commentary, and expertise to *CBM* over the years… some going clear back to *CBM* #2!

Regardless of your personal perspective of grading and its role in the hobby of Comic Book Collecting, it is my personal belief that events which provide an opportunity to meet, discuss, share viewpoints, and get to know one another better will ultimately benefit all hobbyists. So to all who are already planning to be at San Diego '96, be sure and put this one on your schedule. And if you're still thinking about coming to the San Diego Con this summer, but haven't yet decided… I hope an opportunity to participate in this historically important fandom event will clinch your decision. I'm *really* excited about the first ever National Comic Book Grading Symposium and I look forward to seeing you there!

Gary

Gary M. Carter, Editor

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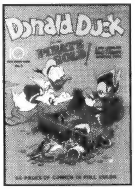

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Two More Pedigree Questions

It was enjoyable talking with you the other day — as it always is. If I mention minor quibbles with one of my articles in CBM please recognize that they are just that. I know you have limited time and space within which to work — and it's not easy when my submission comes in at the last minute.

Issue #32 was really an excellent issue. It was well-balanced between different eras of comics as well as on an important aspect of collecting: pedigree comics. I did think of a couple of additional questions/answers I would like to have added to my comments on pedigrees:

(1) What is the definition of a pedigree? Any comic I want to sell. (I didn't make it up but I like it.)

(2) Can you actually read pedigree comics? Yes you can read pedigree comics. Although I generally collect high-grade comics, I read all of them — Mile Highs and Gaines' file copies included. Granted, I read them very carefully (putting them inside another magazine to avoid finger prints and never fully opening the book), but it does not inhibit my enjoyment of the stories. I actually prefer reading real comics over reading reprints.

(OK, I confess. There is one of my comics that I haven't read and won't! It's one of the greatest covers of all time and the copy that I have is so perfect and fragile that I can't bring myself to read it. Besides, it's available in reprint.)

Alan Bartholomew, Arizona

Close, But No Cigar

Please accept my best wishes for 1996. CBM continues to be a highlight of my month. It is a provider of sanity and continuity in a crazy and disjointed world.

Noting Matt Schiffman's report that dealers "believe that Our Army At War is shaping up to be the Timelys of early 96", I feel I must play my part in the Sgt. Rock/Easy Company controversy. The fact is, there can be no controversy — issue #81 is neither the first appearance of Sgt. Rock nor Easy Company! The fact is, in the famous six-page story "The Rock of Easy Co." in #81, the character is referred to by name five times, and each time it is as "Sgt. Rocky". Close, but no cigar.

It doesn't matter that Kubert doesn't draw Sgt. Rock until #83 — the character in #81 has a different (though similar) name. Prototype issue, maybe, but not a first appearance!

Of course, things now get even more complicated. The first appearance of Sgt. Rock by name is in #82, where the character is actually called "Sgt. Rock" on the first page. Trouble is, not only is he not the main character in the story, the artist is Mort Drucker, who I don't believe drew the feature again. Robert Kanigher later stated that Drucker was the one artist whose talent he did not fully appreciate while he was working for him. Drucker DC war is a great treat, but he is not associated with the star Sgt. he actually drew first! (The #82 story is titled "Hold Up Easy".)

Joe Kubert does begin Sgt. Rock with "The Rock and the Wall" in #83. A text feature in Our Army At War #280 states "Bob Kanigher regards 'The Rock and the Wall' as the first true Sgt. Rock story." Issue #280 then retreats by billing itself as "Celebrating the 200th anniversary of Sgt. Rock" — in other words, making #81 the debut. Of course, Kubert had drawn Easy Company before #83. His cover for #73 is one of my favorites, and in the Easy Company story "Shooting Gallery" the character called "The Sarge" bears a great resemblance to Rock in a couple of panels.

And to make things even more bizarre, I have spotted a reference to Easy that predates Our Army At War entirely — in Harvey Kurtzman's Two Fisted Tales #26, March/April 1952. The story is "Link-Up".

Let the battle over first appearances begin! As ever,

Paul Gambaccini, London, England

I've been involved in a number of heated debates on this *(Continued on page 10)*

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★ **Norm Breyfogle**
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topic, and I have always supported the proposition that you propose. However, for some reason many collectors want to "believe in" their copies of Our Army At War #81 and have suggested that I'm "splitting hairs" when I suggest that "Rocky" is not "Rock". Perhaps some DC war collector on the other side of this fence will take up the gauntlet in favor of Sgt. Rocky. I'll reserve room for their rebuttal in a future CBM.

Overwhelming Rarity

CBM keeps getting better and better! I had looked forward to the Pedigree Issue (CBM #32) for months, ever since you mentioned it several issues back. The features were very in depth and helpful to collectors like myself who are interested in the history of our hobby and its famous discoveries. I don't think there is a fan around who wouldn't love to "stumble" onto the next great cache of pristine Golden Age comics! Besides the Mile High discovery (which still fascinates me), it was interesting to hear the stories behind the other, lesser-touted pedigree collections that have been brought to light over the years.

Collectors must understand that key Golden Age specimens such as contained in the pedigree collections would command a multiple of price guide in such magnificent shape, even if they weren't "Mile High" or "Bethlehem". The rarity of near mint Golden Age keys is overwhelming as it is. However, I feel that part of the "Multiples-of-Guide" pricing may be justified simply by the notoriety of the provenance. Not only is having a pedigree comic like owning a piece of famous comic book memorabilia, but no gray area is left in the book's description. If I were to call a dealer offering him a Mile High key issue (let me dream!), not only would they understand all aspects of the book's appearance, they may also have actually seen that particular copy! By being part of a large collection of high quality comics, an issue in particular becomes generally easier to describe. In contrast, my collection has books of all grades; therefore the books therein must be addressed individually.

Anyway, the Murphy Anderson interview was also superb. We all know his pencils are among the finest, but it was great for you to have brought out Mr. Anderson's accomplishments as an inker! He's also one of the nicest artists I've met. Thanks for another great issue!!

Paul Stefanowicz, New Jersey

Aluminum Age?

Can we come up with a name for that gray area between the Golden Age and the Silver Age? Half the articles I read seem to waffle around because the writers don't know what to call that wonderful era that brought us everything from horror and cowboy comics to the best of Barks and Matt Baker. Of course we can't even pinpoint it exactly (some commentators feel that the Golden Age didn't end till the Silver began), but the best dates for this nameless age are probably from 1946 to

Happy Birthday Carl Barks!

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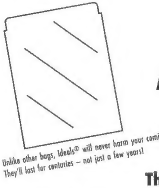

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Ode to a Tale-Spinner

We thank thee Carl
for wonderous tales
of Larkies, scamps
and mountain trails.
The Beagle Boys
their ways so bold
Oh how they lusted
after gold.
And Magica
her foof bombs thrown -
she should have been after
the Philosopher's Stone.
The Goose Egg Nugget
the Golden Fleece
the Candy-striped Ruby
and the golden geese.
The Old Castle's Secret
giving way to taps -
a secret valley
with a billion bottle caps.
The Terries and the Fermies
rolling deep underground
and tiny ducks from space
flying all around.
On safari in Africa,
all the animals they'd ride
courtesy of info from
the Junior Woodchucks Guide.
Bombie the Zombie
and the Mummy's Ring,
Flintheart Glomgold and his
ball of string.
The eggs of Plain Awful
and the lemonade stand
the endless cups of coffee
that Scrooge forever scammed.
Horseradish, hot peppers, nutmeg tea,
all of these are stories special to me.
So thank you Carl Barks,
for all that you have done
We're anxious for the next one -
we think ninety-five is young!

— Becky Hoff

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1955, when superheroes slumped, yet the industry enjoyed its biggest boom to date, with a proliferation of different genres from crime to comedy. You could make a case for calling this period the Platinum Age, since it was so profitable, but I doubt if fans of the guys in tights will accept the use of so precious a metal to designate a period when their boys weren't on top. And I think the term Aluminum Age would make a lot of sense to people who were around back then, but it's probably too esoteric.

So here's my best suggestion: Atom Age or Atomic Age. What do you think? Yours,

Les Daniels, Rhode Island

More Hitler Covers

Just read CBM #31 - "thanks" for another great issue! CBM is always enjoyable, and the last few issues have been a treat: L.B. Cole, Pre-code Horror, WWII propaganda covers - keep 'em comin'!

The Young Allies #1 alternate cover was riveting — I can't recall another Golden Age cover with ol' Joe Stalin on the cover (and brandishing a dagger, no less!): I'd love to see that cover blown up to size and in color. I wonder if Simon & Kirby had a hand in the creation of this cover? The article did not mention who drew it, but it looks like it could be one of theirs; despite Joe Simon's disparaging remarks about it, it's an interesting cover.

I enjoyed Alan Bartholomew's article on Hitler comics. It was a well-written take on one of the most fascinating areas of comic book collecting. While his list adds many titles to the tally of "Hitler covers" that was published in Overstreet's Comic Monthly #19, it is far from complete. I'd like to share my own additions and corrections, and hope other collectors will do the same.

First some errata. America's Greatest #7 is not a Hitler cover... obviously, this is supposed to be America's Best #7. Also, three of the covers listed do not, in my opinion, feature Hitler, but instead show mustachioed men that have been mistaken for Hitler: Animal Antics #1, dated 1946, is not even a WWII comic, and other than the fact that the man being pulled out of the hat has dark hair and a mustache, I see no evidence that he is supposed to be Hitler. Comedy #9's zany cover shows a man being attacked by a group of kids. His silly,

mismatched garb (checkered pants, an ill-fitting vest, polka-dot handkerchief, top hat, and a pocket watch the size of an alarm clock) are suggestive of a vaudeville clown rather than Hitler. His extremely long, thin mustache is also sported by the gent on the cover of National #12. While it could be argued that these covers are not meant to depict Hitler, only to evoke him in their broad lampooonery, I think the mustaches are actually the give-away that they are not meant to be him at all. Hitler's most idiosyncratic, recognizable facial feature was his tiny mustache, and any artist wishing to caricature him was sure to capture it well. Villains on stage and in the cinema, however, did at that time stereotypically feature such long, thin, "handlebar" mustaches, which could be twirled by the villain as a cackled maniacally. It is this stereotype to which I believe these covers play.

There are over a dozen Hitler covers that still have not been documented:

All Star #24 - Hitler rides a horse;

Big Shot #43 - Not in the Photo-Journal! Sparky Watts plucks Hitler's mustache for his paintbrush - ouch!;

Famous Funnies #102 - Hitler, Hirohito, and Mussolini cover;

Fantastic #22 - Confusing cover with Samson bursting out of an oven shaped like Hitler's head, as a bound girl is inserted. Is the Nazi on the right, Hitler?;

Krazy Komics #9 - Funny animals make fun of Der Fuehrer;

Marvel Mystery #64 - Although tiny, Hitler can be made out in the stands, ready to enjoy the spectacle of GI's being bulldozed on this Schomburg classic;

Mystery Men #27 - Isn't that Adolf in the lower right corner, pointing a gun at the Blue Beetle?;

Silver Streak #16 - A gnarly-looking Hitler cringes behind the cannon;

Silver Streak #21 - Cover is first page of the Saint story, and has Hitler in the second panel, congratulating a Kapitan: "You haff done vell!...You haff killed many women und children!"

Thrilling #45 - Hitler is being shot by one Commando Cub while another paints a yellow "X" over a portrait of Hitler on the wall.

USA #2 - My absolute favorite of the "over-looked" Hitler covers. This Simon & Kirby gem depicts Capt. Terror slugging a Nazi (whose right hand is replaced by a hook) as a large drilling machine, seemingly designed by Dr. Seuss, blasts through the steel wall of the self-labeled "New York Tunnel", allowing Nazi troops in airtight helmets to march through. And who is behind the wheel of this marvelous mechanical drill, complete with a swastika painted on the side? Why, none other than Hitler himself is clutching the wheel! This one has to be seen in person to be appreciated, and it is even more amazing when one considers that with a Nov. '41 cover date, it precedes the U.S.'s entry into WWII!

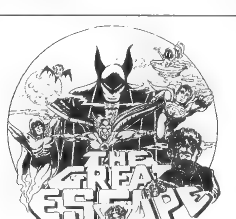
USA #9 - Hitler is in the center of the cover, banging his fist on the table in anger as Cap leaps to save Bucky.

Zip #20 - Hitler can be seen in the bottom right corner.

Hope these additions complete the list of "known" covers. If anyone knows where I can get a Catman #20, please let me know!

Andy Townsend, New York

(*Continued on page 68*)



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FOUR COLOR POE!

BY PAT S. CALHOUN

Although it might be fashionable in academic literary circles (assuming such things still exist) to debate the genius of Edgar Allan Poe, for students of fantasy and science fiction it is impossible to argue anything but that Poe's influence has been a great force. His first successful story, "Manuscript Found In A Bottle", provided a paradigm of the "voyage into the unknown" plot and style, that, over 100 years later, would be so well employed by H. P. Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith in the pages of the pulp magazine *Weird Tales*. When horror comic books began to appear in the

AND THE SILKEN SAD
UNCERTAIN RUSTLING
OF EACH PURPLE CURTAIN
THRILLED ME-
FILLED ME WITH FANTASTIC
TERRORS NEVER FELT
BEFORE...

–THE RAVEN, 1844

post-WWII years Poe was the author of choice when it came time to adapt a classic short story to comics form. *Nightmare*, published first by Ziff-Davis and later by St. John, featured three different Poe adaptations. The first one we'll be looking at here appeared in *Nightmare* #11 (February 1954). This issue has an amazing painted cover by the great Norman Saunders.

The Poe piece is "Hop Frog", a neat little revenge drama about an abused dwarf who is the court jester for an evil king and queen. This is one of Poe's more plot-driven tales- perfect for comics- handled here in a very satisfying manner. The cover story, "Fangs of Death", features art by Bernie Krigstein. The story details the sad fate of a man who gets involved with an enchantress who seems to be part woman and part snake. Also in this issue is "The Medallion", a nifty tale of Hindu hoodoo that takes place in India.

Nightmare #12 (April 1954) has a torture cover by Joe Kubert that looks like it could illustrate an antique tale of the Spanish Inquisition, like "The Pit And The Pendulum". But the Poe story is "The Black Cat"; and it's a nicely straightforward treatment of an excellent tale about a murder cover-up that goes awry in a most ingenious way. It's well drawn, though I'm not sure who the artist is. (Actually, "The Pit And The Pendulum" is the other Poe story that appeared in *Nightmare*- drawn by Everett Raymond Kinstler.) In addition to the grisly cover, this issue contains a yarn where passengers on a ship lost at sea resort to cannibalism. And there's a haunted house story that centers around an old woman who could be related to Norman Bates, the psycho in Robert Bloch's "Psycho." It's a pretty out-there issue from the time when a lot of horror publishers

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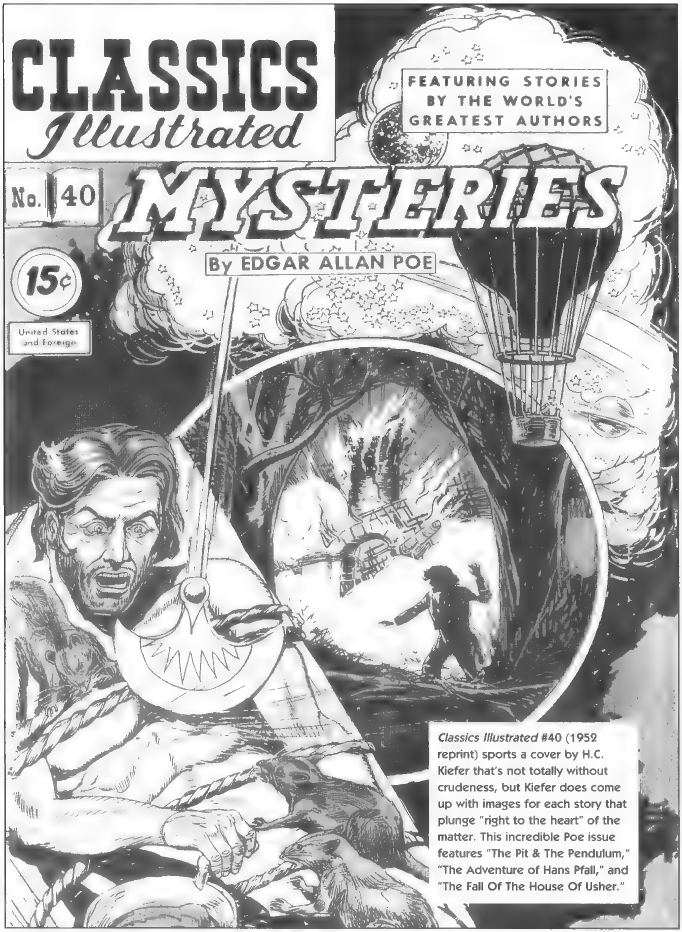


Classics Illustrated #40 (1952 reprint) sports a cover by H.C. Kiefer that's not totally without crudeness, but Kiefer does come up with images for each story that plunge "right to the heart" of the matter. This incredible Poe issue features "The Pit & The Pendulum," "The Adventure of Hans Pfall," and "The Fall Of The House Of Usher."

were pushing the boundaries of good taste with the advent of the Comics Code Authority less than a year away.

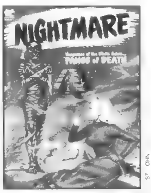
Other publishers who adapted Poe include Youthful, who did a couple of Poe yarns in *Chilling Tales*, which also featured four-color versions of stories by Rudyard Kipling and Sir Walter Scott in its 1952-1953 five issue run; Trans World, a very small publisher who adapted "The Tell-Tale Heart" for their 1948 *Mysterious Traveler Comics* one-shot; and Atlas, who deserves mention for their inspired "rewrite" of "The Pit And The Pendulum" that appeared as "The End" in *Spellbound* #2 from 1952.

However, it was Gilberton who published the ultimate four color Poe book, with their *Classics Illustrated* #40, "Mysteries", which offers three transformings of Poe stories all in one book! This superb anthology was first published in 1947, although all three reprint editions contain the same cover and art. The cover is by the prolific H. C. Kiefer, and it offers insight into all three of the yarns inside. The first story is "The Pit And The Pendulum". This version turns the sometimes pretentious Classics Illustrated tone into an eerie objectivity that tells the story without much authorial judgment upon what transpires. The heavy flatness of the art by August Froehlich also contributes to the aloof atmosphere of this clinical examination of terror. Although the Kinstler-drawn version is quicker and flashier, I prefer the 12-page "The Pit And The Pendulum" here. (This seems like a good place to note that "The Pit And The Pendulum" was also the source material for the outstanding Roger Corman film of the same name from 1961- with a script wonderfully fleshed out to feature length by Richard Matheson.)

The second Poe panelization is in a more humorous vein. "The Adventure Of Hans Phall" tells of a flight to the moon by balloon by a scientist who invents a lighter-than-air gas. It's something of a satire, since the scientist ends up exiled on the moon- which is just fine as much as anyone on Earth cares about him. The art here is by H. C. Kiefer, who demonstrates a flair for funny stuff that matches his straight adventure skills. "Hans Phall" is the longest story in the book- 21 pages with a full-page panel midway through that's a joy to behold.

The third tale is "Fall Of The House Of Usher". This 13-pager delivers on the creepiness- Poe wrote about premature burial as if the concept really filled him with a consuming dread. This fear gives a feeling of truth to the doom-laden mood of the story, and the comic version does a fair enough job, but this is one of Poe's psychological "single effect" stories, where the rhythms of the prose form an integral part of the narrative that's hard to translate into visual terms. The art is by Harley Griffiths, and it's effective enough in a workmanlike way.

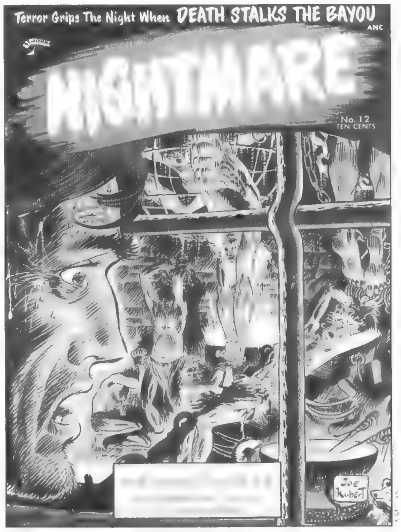
This is one of the better efforts of the Classics Illustrated series. The balancing of the two short horror stories with a long and ludicrous satire in the middle was a clever mix, and the whole thing makes a fine tribute to one of the great pioneers of modern fantasy. ■



Pat Calhoun is a nationally recognized comic book historian.

***Nightmare* #11 (Feb 1954) has a great mummy cover... painted by master artist, Norman "Mars Attacks" Saunders, as well as an adaptation of Edgar Allen Poe's "Hop Frog" inside.**

***Nightmare* #12 (Apr 1954) offers a ghastly glimpse into a torture chamber, rendered in painful pre-code detail by Joe Kubert. The four-color version of Poe's "The Black Cat" that appears in this issue is a perfect translation of the classic tale.**



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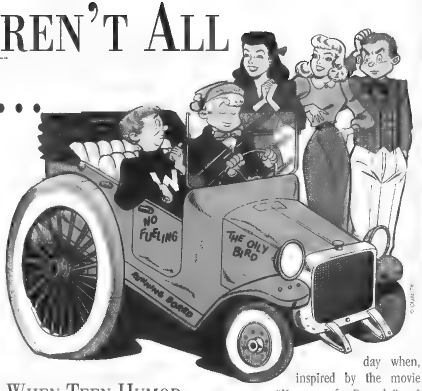
By Michelle Nolan



When Teen Humor Was All The Rage!

Dig this for a bit of revisionist comic book history, folks: Did you know that Archie Comics wasn't even close to being the leading publisher of teen humor during much of Old Carrot Top's first decade of existence?

No, this isn't one of Reggie's schemes to steal the spotlight from Archie. But we're about to pile into the old literary jalopy and go for a revealing ride about the early days of the Bobby Sox comic book generation. But don't get the wrong idea. At the end of our trip, we'll find out that the place to be back in the fab 50s, after all, was right back with the Archie gang down at Pop's Choklit Shoppe.

Make no mistake — Archie is unquestionably the seminal character in the history of teen humor. But it took Archie a lot longer to grow into that position than most current collectors realize. Teen humor in the comics dates back at least to the long-running newspaper strips Freckles and His Friends, created in 1915 by Merrill Blosser, and Harold Teen, created by Carl Ed in 1919.

MGM's series of 15 Andy Hardy movies from 1937-46, starring the young Mickey Rooney, made that befuddled teen character at least as much a household name in his teen heyday as Archie ever has been. And, of course, Paramount's nine Henry Aldrich films from 1939-44, along with the radio program of the same name, provided a huge boost to the teen humor movement. Ask anyone older than 60 and he or she can still probably remember the screeching of Henry's mother in the introduction... "Henreeeee ... Henreeeee Aldrich!" That voice probably still rattles around in their dreams.

Today, however, Archie epitomizes teen humor. But it wasn't always thus. Would you believe that, beginning with his debut in MLJ's *Pep Comics* #22 (December 1941), Archie appeared in only 121 comic books through the end of the 1940's? (See listing.) And in most of those, he was featured in only one story. It took Archie and his multitude of companion characters more than a decade before they emerged as the unquestioned champions of teen humor.

More on that shortly, but first a reminder how many of us loved teen humor comics as pre-teens and young adolescents because they gave us a hint of what to look forward to when we got just a little bit older. I'll never forget handing my fourth-grade teacher an empty sheet instead of a drawing during an art lesson. "Where's your drawing?" she asked. "It's a picture of a cow eating the grass, but the cow ate all the grass and left," I replied, not the least bit embarrassed that I had stolen the idea from (I believe) a Jughead joke. Needless to say, my teacher didn't see the humor in it.

(Never one to quit while I'm behind, I also remember about the same time the day when, inspired by the movie "Horror of Dracula", I impaled a fly on a needle and stuck it in an ice tray, wondering how well-preserved it would be later. I had forgotten about it when I heard my mom let out with a scream of which Henry Aldrich's mother would have been proud.)

Of course, those of us who have reached middle age appreciate teen humor comics more than ever. They enable us to look back on all those embarrassments we suffered in high school, and to laugh at the memory of the days when we were more likely to cry.

Now for the part that might surprise you: Marvel (which soon was to become better known as Atlas) actually out-Archied Archie during a furiously funny peak teen humor period from 1947-50, before Marvel underwent a little-known and temporary implosion during 1950. But all this makes more sense when we look back to the beginning of teen comics.

The first all-teen humor book was Dell *Four Color* #2, starring Harold Teen, which appeared sometime in the first half of 1942. Harold Teen newspaper reprints had been appearing in Dell's *Super Comics* right from #1 (May 1938). Perhaps the first truly original comic book teen, however, was Scribbly, which debuted in Dell's *The*

THE FIRST ELVIS IMPERSONATOR

(RIGHT) **may have been none other than Jughead, in a hilarious 30-page story in the scarce 1957 one-shot "Jughead's Folly."**

THE BOBBY SOX GENERATION

(FACING PAGE) **is exemplified by the last issue of Marvel's "Junior Miss" #39 (Aug 1950). The series was based on a radio show.**

LOGIC WASN'T ALWAYS A FACTOR

(PREVIOUS PAGE) **in teen humor jokes, as shown by the first issue of Quality's "Jonesy" #85 (Aug 1953). "Jonesy" formerly was "Crack Western".**

Funnies #2 (November 1936), as the creation of 19-year-old cartoonist Sheldon Meyer, who was destined to become one of the great creators and editors in comic book history. Scribbly went on to his greatest glory in the pages of *All-American Comics* #1-59 from 1939-44. Meyer's creation was so brilliant he deserves an article all his own (which is an upcoming project).

When *Archie* #1 (Winter 1942-43) appeared—the first original comic devoted largely (but not yet entirely) to a teen humor character—the pride of Riverdale had been appearing as a backup character in *Pep Comics* for about a year, but only in six-page stories (well, one was eight-pages and one was seven). Archie also appeared in six-to-eight-page stories in *Jackpot Comics* #4 (Winter 1941-42) through #9 (Summer 1943, the last issue). Archie first shared a cover on *Pep Comics* #36 (February 1943), but it wasn't until *Pep* #50 (September 1944) that he became the cover feature for good, displacing The Shield and (earlier) The Hangman. Archie didn't get his first lead story (10 pages) until *Pep* #49 (June 1944), the same date as *Archie Comics* #8.

In other words, Archie was hardly an overnight sensation. It took him 2 1/2 years to take over the lead feature in *Pep*. In fact, by the end of 1946 (five years into the life of Archie) he had appeared in a grand total of 69 comic books, including only 10 in 1945 (when wartime paper restrictions may have been the reason *Pep* temporarily went from bimonthly to quarterly). Ironically, another MLJ teen character, Wilbur, actually appeared before Archie as a backup character, debuting in *Zip Comics* #18 (September 1941). Wilbur, however, didn't get his own comic until Summer 1944, and he never enjoyed the widespread popularity that Archie eventually did. Wilbur was never even featured on a *Zip* cover, even though eight other characters were out front at least once during Wilbur's run.

Then came 1947 and the teen comic book boom. No less than 18 different teen humor titles (as contrasted to anthology titles with one or two teen backup characters) had debuted from 1942 to 1946, including three one-shots (see list). But the old jalopies really started clogging comic book avenues in 1947, when Marvel and several other companies began to make the teen scene in earnest.

Marvel publisher Martin Goodman was notorious for taking a popular idea and running with it, to the extent that he almost single-handedly glutted the market several times over the years with several different genres of comics (sound familiar?). From

IT'S TEEN HUMOR... CAN YOU DIG IT, DADEO?

ARCHIE IN THE 1940's
1941 - Pep #29; Dec
1942 - Pep #23-34; Jackpot #4-7
1943 - Archie #1-5, Pep #35-44, Jackpot #8-9.
1944 - Archie #6-11; Pep #45-51.
1945 - Archie #12-17; Pep #52-55.
1946 - Archie #18-23; Pep #56-59; Laugh #20-21.
1947 - Archie #24-29, Pep #60-64; Laugh #22-24
1948 - Archie #30-35; Pep #65-70; Laugh #95-30.
1949 - Archie #36-41, Pep #71-76; Laugh #31-36

1942 46 TEEN FIRST ISSUES
Harold Teen one-shot, Four Color #2, 1942 (Dell)
Archie #1, Win 1942-43 (MLJ)
Hap Hazard #1, Sum 1944 (Ace)
Wilbur #1, Sum 1944 (MLJ)
Junior Miss #1 one-shot, 1944 (Marvel)
Miss America #2, Nov 1944 (Marvel)
Buzzy #1, Win 1944-45 (DC)
Patches #1, March-April 1945 (Orbit)
Georgie #1, Spring 1945 (Marvel)
Young Life #1, Summer 1945 (New Age)
Patsy Walker #1, 1945 (Marvel)
Keen Teens #1, 1945 (ME)
Topsy Turvy #1 one-shot, 1945 (Leffingwell)
Cookie #1, April 1946 (ACG)
Sweet Sixteen #1, Aug.-Sept. 1946 (Parents)
Taffy #4, Sept. 1946 (Orbit, 1st 3 were funny animal)
Laugh #20, Fall 1946 (MLJ)
Willie #5, Fall 1946 (Marvel)

EARLY DC TEEN HUMOR
Buzzy #1-34 (1945-50)
A Date With Judy #1-19 (1947-50)
Leave It To Binky #1-17 (1948-50)
Scribbly #1-13 (1948-50)

THE 1947-50 MARVEL TEEN HUMOR EXPLOSION
All-Teen #20 (1947)
Cindy #27-40 (1947-50)
Frankie #4-15 (1947-49)
Georgie #9-28 (1947-50 issues, but began 1945 and ended 1952)
Jeanie #13-27 (1947-49)
Junior Miss #24-39 (1947-50)
The Kelleys #23-25 (1950, continued from Rusty)
Lana #1-7 (1948-49)
Margie #35-49 (1947-49)
Miss America Vol. 5 #3-Vol. 7 #36 (1947-50, 43 issues, but began 1944 and ended 1958)

1947 through 1950—the year most Marvel comics were briefly reduced to quarterly publication — Marvel published no fewer than 232 issues devoted exclusively or primarily to teen humor, covering 14 different titles. And this doesn't count Marvel's "working girl" titles, such as *Millie The Model*, *Nellie The Nurse* and *Tessie The Typist*, who are first cousins to the teens, but don't count in teen humor comic count.

In steady but diminished contrast during the 1947-50 period, Archie published only 101 comics with teen humor, including the first two or three issues of *Archie's Pal Jughead*, *Archie's Girls, Betty And Veronica*, *Archie's Rival Reggie* and the *Archie Annual*, along with the bi-monthly *Archie, Pep, Laugh*, and *Wilbur Comics*.

DC, that relative rock of comic book publishing stability compared to mercurial Marvel, competed well with Archie as DC published 73 comics devoted to the "town's top teens" from 1947-50—*Buzzy* #11-34, *A Date With Judy* #1-19, *Leave It To Binky* #1-17, and the ill fated *Scribbly* #1-13.

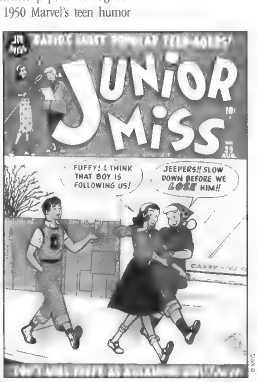
In other words, during that era of teen excess, you could find more than two Marvel teens for every Archie title and more than three Marvel titles for every DC teen.

There were, for starters, Marvel teens such as Patsy, Hedy, Cindy, Frankie, Fluffy, Georgie, Jeanie, Lana, Margie, Mitzi, Oscar, Rusty, and Willie, among others. But not for long. Several of them, in fact, ended their comic book days briefly as younger versions of themselves, predating the concept of Little Archie by seven years or so.

In addition to Marvel, Archie, and DC, more than a dozen other companies were active in the teen humor market during its peak years of 1947-50 — so much so that at least 252 other teen humor comics were issued. Altogether, the count for those four years is at least 658—meaning that Archie then published fewer than one in six teen humor comics! In other words, Archie enjoyed only about 15 percent of the market! Archie sales probably were closer to at least 20 percent of the market, but the point is that Archie was far from dominant.

DC's "Teen Big Three" remained popular throughout most of the 1950s, but after 1950 Marvel's teen humor

That's more teen humor comics during that era than horror comics... more teen humor comics than crime comics... and more teen humor comics than super hero comics!



Mitzi (Boy Friend, Romances) #1-10 (1948-49)
Oscar #24-25, 3-10, 13 (1947-1949)
Patsy Walker #9-31 (1947-50 issues, but began 1945 and ended 1965)
Rusty #12-22 (1947-49)
Teen Comics #21-35 (1947-50)
Willie #5-19, 22-23 (1946-50)

OTHER 1942-59 TEEN HUMOR TITLES OF SPECIAL INTEREST

Aggie Mack #1-8 (1948-49, Four Star/Superior, Feldstein-Kamen art)
Dizzy Dames #1-6 (1952-53, ACG, the most politically incorrect title of all time)
Dollface and Her Gang - Four Color #309 (1951, Dell, newspaper strip by Betty Betz)
Everything Happens to Harvey #1-7 (1953-54, DC, wildly funny and out-of-place DC strip that failed for some reason)
Farmer's Daughter #1-4 (1954, Stanmor)
Four Teeners #34 (1948, Ace, one-shot, went from Four Favontes #32 to Penalty #33 to Four Teeners #34 to Dotty #35 to Glamorous Romances #41 — five different titles in 10 issues, epitomizing the post-Golden Age publishing turmoil)
Jughead's Folly #1 (1957 one-shot, Archie, Jughead as perhaps the first Elvis imitator in popular culture, a scarce comic well worth finding & enjoying)
Juke Box Comics #1-6 (1948-49, Famous Funnies, represents pop culture well)
Junior Comics #9-16 (1947-48, Fox, pricey Feldstein art)
Joe College #1-2 (1949-50, Hillman, rare comics worth collecting for title alone)
Meet Miss Pepper #5-6 (1954, St. John, Kubert/Maurer art)
Meet Miss Bliss #1-4 (1955, Marvel, unusual comic told from point of view of young teacher)
My Date #1-4 (1947-48, Hillman, Simon & Kirby's hybrid attempt at teen humor and romance)
Ricky #5 & Rodger Dodger #5 (1952, Standard oneshots)
Slick Chick Comics #1-3 (1947, Leader, another comic with a wonderful title)
Sunny, America's Sweetheart #11-14 (1947-48, Fox, more pricey Feldstein art)
Susie Q Smith Dell Four Color #323, 377, 453, 553 (1951-54, arche-typical teen newspaper strip)
Teena #11, 12, 15 (1948, ME, part of A-1 series; #20-22, 1949-50, Standard; Hilda Terry's whimsical and evocatively drawn newspaper strip)

comics were devoted almost entirely to one girl and her retinue—the unforgettable Patsy Walker. Patsy and her pals appeared in at least 210 comics from 1951-59, more than any teen except Archie. It's no wonder that many middle-aged women often remember Patsy & Hedy as well as they do their zits and Betty & Veronica.

A MUCH MORE MATURE VERSION of Betty & Veronica was sometimes shown during the 1940s, as in this splash page from *Archie* #27 (Jul-Aug 1947).

How popular were teen humor comics? This popular: Beginning with that historic *Archie* #1, no fewer than 1,883 comics covering 116 titles were devoted entirely or primarily to teen humor over the next 17 years through 1959.

This includes 562 from Archie (not counting *Pep* #21-65, before it truly became a teen humor comic), 518 from Marvel, 232 from DC, and 571 from other publishers (grateful thanks and an ice cream sundae to Southern California collector Dan Stevenson for assisting me in verifying the counts). We may have overlooked a few, but surely you dig the concept.

That's more teen humor comics during that era than horror comics… more teen humor comics than crime comics… and more teen humor comics than superhero comics!

Betty and Veronica
HUBBA HUBBA, BETTY! THESE NEW SWIM SUITS ARE SIMPLY SUPER! I MEAN AWEALLY! I JUST CAN'T WAIT 'TIL WE CAN WEAR THEM ON THE BEACH TOMORROW!
JUST WAIT 'TILL THOSE DRIPS ON THE BEACH GET A LOAD OF US, RONNIE! THEY'LL SIMPLY DROWN IN DROOL!

At this point, and because teen/girl/romance comics played an important role in the survival of Marvel Comics during the late 1950s, let's debunk—once and for all, please!—the oft-repeated belief that Marvel (Atlas) stopped publishing during its 1957 implosion when the American News Company's distribution business collapsed. It is true that Marvel's title count was drastically reduced and that editor/writer Stan Lee was left with a lot of backlog art and no other staffers, but it's equally true that Marvel continued to publish, without fail, exactly eight comic books each and every month (limited to that number by a distribution/printing agreement with National Comics) for the next couple of years. Marvel gradually increased that total until the company freed itself of its limitations by the late 1960s.

Numerous last issues with the Atlas logo, including *Patsy & Her Pals* #29 and the *Hedy Wolfe* and *Date With Patsy* one-shots, were dated either August or September 1957. The only Atlas/Marvel issue dated October was the one-shot *Dippy Duck* #1 (a must for any collection of historical interest!)

Of the 16 titles that survived the Atlas implosion to emerge with no logo, six were teen/girl/romance titles, so you can see how important they still were at this late date in the relative scheme of things. Care to see how methodical Marvel was with its survivng titles? Well, with one exception, they continued in perfect alphabetical order.

There were eight titles dated November 1957: *Gunsmoke Western* #43, *Homer the Happy Ghost* #16, *Kid Colt* #75, *Love Romances* #72, *Marines in Battle* #20, *Millie the Model* #81, *Miss America* #87, and *My Own Romance* #60. And there were eight dated December 1957: *Battle* #55 (the alphabetical exception, probably a change of a canceled title or some such), *Navy Combat* #15, *Patsy & Hedy* #55, *Patsy Walker* #74, *Strange Tales* #60, *Two Gun Kid* #39, *World of Fantasy* #9, and *Wyatt Earp* #14.

At the end of 1959, teen/girl/romance titles were still deemed so important to Marvel that they covered not fewer than seven of its 16 titles, and an eighth such title, *My Girl Pearl*, was briefly revived in 1960.

There was still competition in the late 1950's Choklit Shoppe racks for Archie. But by this time, Riverdale rules (as, no doubt, the signs of those times proclaimed during athletic events) and soon would emerge as the all-time champion of teen humor.

But it was a long time coming. Can you dig it, now? ■

Michelle Nolan is a nationally recognized collector and researcher of comic books from the '40s through the '60s. She has one of the most extensive collections of 1950's comic books in the United States. In real life Michelle works as a freelance journalist.

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Batman's Alter-Ego

by Joe Desris

Dick

A major force in early DC Comics, Sprang continues his comic book legacy in the 1990s.

Sprang

Richard Sprang was born in Fremont, Ohio, in 1915. His father was a mechanical and electrical engineer, sparking Dick's interest in depicting the complex machinery and props eventually realized in his commercial art. Sprang's only formal art training took place in high school, however he was sufficiently self-motivated to combine desire, talent, and studying on his own to rise to the ranks of a professional. Among his influences: Alex Raymond (Flash Gordon), Hal Foster (Prince Valiant), Milton Caniff (Terry and the Pirates, Steve Canyon) and illustrators Howard Pyle, N.C. Wyeth, Harold von Schmidt, Dean Cornwell, Robert Fawcett, and Rockwell Kent.

At 15, Sprang began painting signs, billboards, and street banners (in addition to lobby posters) for Fremont's two movie houses. Following high school in 1934, he was hired by the *Toledo News Bee* newspaper. His assignments in the art department included layout, composition, advertising art, editorial cartooning, and meeting deadlines. (Five editions were published every day!) He served as a photographer's assistant and as a "leg man" on selected stories.

Sprang quit the *News Bee* in 1936 and moved to New York City… where he freelanced with fellow artists Ed Kressy and Norm Fallon from a loft office on 42nd Street (between Fifth Avenue and Grand Central Station). They were organized more to share expenses rather than serve as an agency or comic book production shop. But as a group, they mainly produced advertising illustrations, while also handling lettering and scripts. They also designed bread wrappers and tried to solve the problems of printing on cellophane.

Around 1937 or 1938, they collaborated on "Secret Agent X-9" newspaper-strip continuity… which was laid out by Sprang, penciled by Kressy, and inked by Fallon. They also worked on "The Lone Ranger" newspaper strip for several months after its September 11, 1938 inception, and wrote scripts for the masked man's radio show. Several Power Nelson stories in *Prize Comics* followed and Sprang recalls that they may have done two covers as well.

Independently, Sprang began illustrating pulp stories in 1936. His first sale was to Street and Smith Publications. He subsequently worked for Standard Magazines and Columbia Publications. Recalling the weekly "Artist's Day" at Standard, Sprang remembers that "…we'd go up and sit in the waiting room. Just showed up, no appointment. You weren't invited into the editor's office or anything. There you sat. All these guys, all suspicious of each other. Some gal [would] come out and hand you [assignments]. What a way to make a living."

The majority of Sprang's assignments appeared in Western pulps where he showcased his knowledge of equipment, horse gear, and technical details. He wrote approximately 27 Western pulp stories during this period. His illustrations also appeared in an issue of *The Shadow* as well as other detective and adventure pulps.

He wrote for Columbia and was a selector/screener of stories submitted by other writers. Sprang ran this large "slush pile" of freelance submissions on a weekly basis, working at a rate of 10¢ per 1,000 words, or about 50¢ per script. "Every dollar of income counted in the depression days of the late 1930s," recalls Sprang. "Most of the stuff was junk. And it took only minutes to see that nine-tenths of [it] was not acceptable. I'd make maybe four, five, six dollars out of just sitting at my desk and leafing through this foot high slush pile.

"I was becoming a pretty good writer," continues Sprang. "It's true enough that a short story writer, even a novelist, will try to tell as much of his story as he can in dialog. I didn't do this so much in westerns. I dealt with the narrative, I dealt with the scene, I dealt with the environment… how they influenced the characters and so on. This is what I was interested in. Well, in comics, drawing is the narrative. Let somebody else do the dialog. I wasn't interested. I wanted to draw it. I wanted to illustrate."

In 1941, intending to emulate a comic book page, Sprang designed a large, multi-panel sample illustration and showed it to editor Whit Ellsworth at DC Comics. "He

A young Dick Sprang during the golden years of Batman.

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gave me three pages of a Batman script that had already been published," recalls Sprang, "and said 'I want it back in four days. I want to see what you do and the way you interpret the script. Don't bother with the lettering; just pencil and ink it.' "

When Sprang delivered the pages, Ellsworth paid him and immediately assigned him a 13-page Batman story, thus making Sprang the fifth artist to draw Batman. Sprang recalls that Kressy probably roughed out this first Batman story while Sprang penciled and either Fallon or Sprang inked it.

Batman rescues a bound Robin from the horrors of the pit and the pendulum on the Dick Sprang rendered cover of *Detective Comics* #93 (Nov 1944).

"I brought the whole story in," Sprang continues, "penciled, lettered, and inked. He [Ellsworth] went through it, not too rapidly, not too slowly. He squared the [pages] up, laid them down, picked up the phone and called Ben Weinstein, the comptroller, and said 'Write out a check for Dick Sprang' for whatever the page rate was, I think $33 at that time. He paid me for the full story.

"I said look, I've been freelancing around New York here for some years. I've never brought in a work of this magnitude where there weren't some changes wanted. Whit said, 'Sure. I can understand that, but we don't operate that way. If there's a minor change needed, the boys in the bullpen will do it.' He said 'they're damn good artists, but they just prefer to work in here. If it's a major change, okay, we'll talk it over with you if something's wrong. This looks fine. We like the way you interpret the script and you got it in on time. With those two things in your pocket, you can do Batman as long as you want.' " Sprang had now found a steady job and, after leaving Kressy and Fallon, went on to pencil, ink and letter more Batman stories; he soon was penciling and inking covers as well.

Ellsworth's concerns about the potential drafting of artist Bob Kane (who created Batman along with writer Bill Finger) resulted in Sprang's material being inventoried for future use. Sprang himself was drafted twice, but his 20/40 vision kept him out of the service during World War II. And although Kane never was called up for military service, he did halt his comic book art chores (for what would be nearly three years) and began penciling the daily and Sunday adventures of the newspaper strip, "Batman And Robin", which premiered October 25, 1943.

With Kane no longer available to work on comic book adventures, the Sprang art backlog was quickly put to good use. The public unveiling of Dick Sprang's unique interpretations of Batman and Robin first appeared in *Batman* #19 (dated October/November 1943), a book which not only boasted four Sprang stories but a Sprang cover as well. Issue #21 of *Batman* also carried four stories by Sprang and three stories each appeared in issues #23, #24 and #26.

"At one time I know it was suggested to copy [Jerry] Robinson," says Sprang, recalling directions given by Ellsworth. "He always drew Batman with a long neck. And I did for awhile; you'll see that in some of that early work. In fact [on] that cover for the "Three Musketeers" story, [and] that chariot cover, he's got a long neck. And I think after that one I went back to a shorter neck. Finally, Whit told me, 'Do anything you want with Batman. Just go your way.' Well I considered that from many angles. I decided that the essential figure should be kept as it was but I'd thicken his waist somewhat.

Close-up of *Batman* #23 (Jun/Jul 1944), Dick Sprang's first cover rendition of the Joker for the title.

"I brought the Batman story in ... penciled, lettered, and inked. Whit Ellsworth went through it... then he picked up the phone and called the DC comptroller, and said 'Write out a check for Dick Sprang!' "

Make him a little more athletic and fluid than Kane did, although Robinson made him very fluid, but not in the way I particularly liked. And that was it. I didn't change him any more than that. Shortened his ears a little bit and so on."

The editors appreciated Sprang's unique qualifications and abilities at interpreting a script and eventually wanted to increase his output… so beginning in October 1945, they began assigning only penciling duties to Sprang, while still paying him the same page rate. Penciling a story posed more problems and challenges than inking, particularly with Sprang's detailed efforts. Yet the flattering net result was that Sprang had less work to do and was earning as much as before. The men who inked Sprang include Gene McDonald, Stan Kaye, Sheldon Moldoff, and, perhaps most notably, Charles Paris.

When Sprang began at DC, he earned $33 for a penciled, inked, and lettered page. He later received the same for just penciling and his rate subsequently was raised to $35 and then $38 per page.

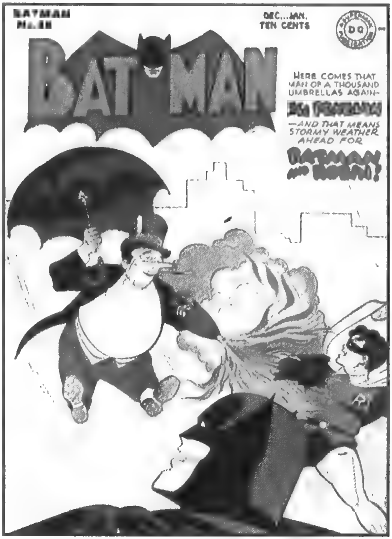
Living in New York and working at home, Sprang turned out a story roughly every two weeks. He visited the office every week to deliver finished pages, pick up a check, and receive his next script. He declined an offer to work on the aforementioned "Batman And Robin" newspaper strip at its 1943 inception, although he later penciled a six-week daily continuity which appeared during February/March 1946. During the late 1940s, Sprang received a byline on some material in *Real Fact Comics*, the only such credit during his initial relationship with DC. He drew the first appearance of the Riddler in *Detective Comics* #140 (October 1948) and worked on many classic adventures with famous villains such as Joker, Penguin, and Catwoman. Throughout his career, he principally illustrated Batman stories and covers for *Detective Comics*, *Batman* and *World's Finest Comics*. From 1955 until 1963, he penciled many of the Superman-Batman team-up stories for *World's Finest Comics* and received several art assignments for *Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen*, *Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane* and *Superman*. Occasionally frustrated by haphazard writing, Sprang infrequently rewrote portions of stories when he thought it necessary.

Sprang moved to Sedona, Arizona, in May 1946, later moving to a 150-acre Utah ranch in 1956 and in 1972, returned to Arizona where he currently lives.

He departed comics in 1963 with his last original work from the period seeing print later that year ("The Flame-Master" from *Detective Comics* #308, October 1963). He subsequently kept occupied on his Utah ranch and worked on historical investigations of Western pioneer trails, occasionally finding time to draw and paint. He has worked on some documentary art, including various detailed historical subjects, and has made oral history tapers for the National Park Service.

His expertise as a photographer and practiced draftsman, along with a fascination for historic river canyon terrain, led Sprang to join up with several like-minded canyoneer friends. During the 1950s, as Canyon Surveys, they annually documented historical pictographs and prehistoric ruins in wilderness areas such as the Colorado River's Glen Canyon damsite prior to its flooding.

Sprang had not been in touch with the DC Comics staff and was "located" by fandom during the mid-1970s. "I gave a lecture at the college up in Flagstaff, Northern



***Detective* #85 (Mar 1944) features two Jokers… one of Sprang's most novel cover art concepts.**

"Here comes the man of 1,000 umbrellas again" on *Batman* #38 (Dec 1946/Jan 1947). Sprang perfectly captures both the humor and the villainy of the Penguin in his cover art.

Arizona ,versity," he recalls. "[I] met a young man there who was very interested in comics, who had submitted some work to DC. A few years later, he told me that DC doesn't know where you are and they owe you some money. Can you supply them with your social security number and address. So I did and they sent me a check for reprint rights."

Sprang became known among comic books fans and collectors for his ability to instill excitement, motion, and dramatic perspective in his crisp, concise penciling (with a good inker always being a great asset, of course). While his dynamic work on Batman originally appeared largely during the Golden Age, a new audience was introduced to Sprang during the 1960s when DC began their series of *80 Page Giant* magazines. These anthologies inaugurated the reprinting of past stories (a DC policy which continues today), and when it came to Batman adventures, many of the selected stories were by Sprang. In fact, with paperbacks, DC's treasury editions, the 100-page books of the 1970s, hardbound collections of "greatest" stories and the current Archives series, Sprang's work has regularly been available to collectors in some form since 1943!

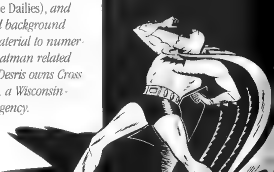
In his office, complete with stand up telephone, art supplies, and stacks of comics, a youthful Dick Sprang energetically develops a new pencil concept for the latest Batman story. This rare photo was taken during the 1940s.

After more than a two-decade absence from comic books, he returned in 1987 with several illustrations that included his favorites (Joker and Penguin) and subsequently a trio of *Detective Comics* covers in 1990 (issues #622-624).

Because of the demand for his original art in the collector's market, Sprang began drawing select examples of his past covers in 1984 and splash pages as of 1990. Originally done for a small group of fans, these colorful re-creations are now highly sought after. Having lost none of the master's touch, and with an ever escalating demand for his work, Sprang entered the limited edition arena in 1995 with the release of his first lithograph, "Secrets of the Batcave". He continues to work steadily, and has a number of artworks planned and in progress. ■

A long-time fan, collector, and historian of Batman, Joe Desris is known throughout fandom as the world's number one Batman fan. His thirty year accumulation of Batman memorabilia includes comics, toys, premiums, original art… the list is too numerous to mention. Joe has authored many articles, several books (including the three volume Batman: The Dailies), *and contributed background research material to numerous other Batman related works. Joe Desris owns Cross Advertising, a Wisconsin-based ad agency.*

The public unveiling of Dick Sprang's unique interpretation of Batman and Robin first appeared in the Oct/Nov 1943 issue of Batman (#19). The book not only boasted four Sprang stories, but a Sprang cover as well.



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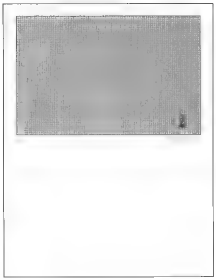

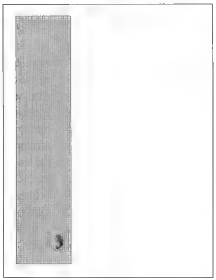

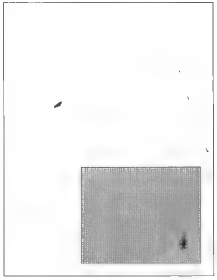

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Gyro's gizmos

by Michael Naiman

Geniuses and mad scientists have always wanted to control the comic book universe. For decades, our beloved superheroes have been battling evil fantastic inventions, doomsday devices, and behemoth "Kirbyesque" creations that have been assembled and let loose on a unprepared world by the likes of Lex Luthor, Dr. Doom, and Dr. Sivana. While whiling away the hours of a Saturday afternoon, I can remember being fascinated by those way-out monster machines and their creators. But, I also recall that my "duck books" featured a character who also had the ability to create some bizarre inventions. While not exactly "human," this tall and lanky chicken might have been the most creative and resourceful "scientist" in all of comicdom. His name... Gyro Gearloose... Inventor Supreme!

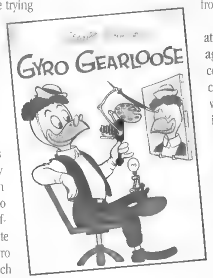
But even with all the enjoyable reading, several questions continue to plague my duck-filled brain. Who invented this wonderful and imaginative character... and where could I find more of these weird and wacky inventions? Many years and hundreds of pages later, I found out!

Springing from the creative genius of Carl Barks, Gyro first landed on the pages of *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* #140 (May 1952) and was to later appear in 90 stories which included five issues of his own *Four Color* series (see chart). Some collectors and fans have often noted that Gyro might be Carl Barks' personal "reflection." Long known for his "inventive" stories, Barks has always had an aptitude for tinkering in the shop and concocting fantastic timesaving gadgets. To this day, Carl continues to fabricate his own work-saving devices. A visit to his studio reveals a rather unique painting easel that is hung from the ceiling enabling Carl to re-adjust the easel into alternative positions at the touch of a fingertip! Because of the extraordinary detail work that Carl puts into each painting, he has recently devised a moveable mechanical arm-rest that enables him to work in minute detail without the strain that often accompanies such close-up work. Whoever said "Necessity is the Mother of Invention" doesn't have to look too far past the confines of the Carl Barks studio.

But, if you really wanted to look far and wide for some startling coincidences, look no further than Kuwait Harbor in the Persian Gulf in the year 1964... where a ship with 6,000 sheep on board had the misfortune to sink. Consulting engineers said that it would take six months to salvage the vessel, but a Danish inventor accomplished the task in six weeks by pumping polystyrene foam into the sunken ship. When attempting to patent the process he was turned down because the process had been previously described and published. Carl Barks had written and drawn a 10-page story in *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* #104 (May 1949) describing the same process using ping pong balls! How the world would have been different if Carl Barks had chosen a different line of work!

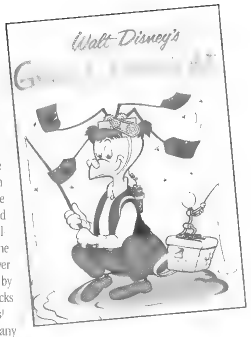
The stories of Carl Barks have always reflected his philosophy that your work could not result in satisfaction unless it ultimately benefits others. This has proven to be a recurring theme in many of the Gyro stories. Creating everyday devices for everyday usage is the oil that lubricates the creative gearworks within Gyro's brain. While being very proud of his abilities, personal or monetary gain from the products is not important, the goal is to help mankind through technology and science....but, the populous of Duckburg is not always appreciative (nor ready) for his contributions. More often than not, the results of Gyro's inventions bring on unpredictable and humorous disasters! The conflict involving modern technology vs. the idyllic world of Duckburg can be seen in many of the themes that are woven into the Gyro tales.

There are many different inventions and stories that could have been chosen, but, like trying to pick a favorite flavor from Baskin Robbins, everyone has their own particular "taste" in Gyro stories.



My list starts with "Mix-up Mixer" from *Four Color* #1095 (April/June 1960). This story is a solid example of Gyro's big city solutions vs. Grandma Duck's country good sense. Asked by Grandma Duck to help prevent an impending flood on the farm, Gyro decides that its time to test his self-feeding, power-squirting concrete mixer. When Grandma points Gyro in the direction of the low-tech sandbags, sand and shovel, Gyro bridles at the thought of such a "manual" way of holding off the imminent gush of water. Throughout the story, Grandma continually suggests that Gyro's machine would be better suited for kitchen chores and, after many embarrassing setbacks, Gyro finally finishes the task. Exhausted by the days work, Gyro awakens from a nap to find that Grandma has gotten her way after all, and utilized the concrete mixer to produce bread for the flood-stricken village residents. As Grandma says, "it was the best dough mixer ever built!"

Whether it's the farmlands of Duckburg or some exotic international locale, Gyro always attempts to bring his well-intentioned inventions to the rescue. Introducing the benefits of technology to the "impoverished" Third World Asian country of Farbakishan, Gyro intends to "help" the people with their water pumping and power problems. "Buffaloed by Buffaloes", a clever 4-pager in *Four Color* #1267 (December 1961/February 1962), depicts Gyro trying to solve the natives power problems by utilizing the indigenous and under-used "buffalo-power." The resulting monopoly of manpower that is required to herd the beasts results in complete disaster for the village. Gyro decides to pull up stakes and leave the country before he has another brilliant idea. As Carl mentions in the last panel "...Farbakishan stays un-uplifted...its people toiling like beasts of burden and its beasts of burden still untoiling!" But all is not wasted, one villager observes.... the power plant's sharp corners are used by the buffaloes to scratch the ticks from their backs!



Gyro's many attempts at helping agrarian reform, solving cosmopolitan conundrums, and general philanthropic contributions might have worked... if it weren't for the foibles of the folks they were intended to assist. As Barks put it so succinctly "Nobody can make a machine so smart that some jerk won't be too dumb to run it!" This fateful quote has its origins in "The Gold Finder," a classic four page fable from *Uncle Scrooge* #18 (June/August 1957). The story unfolds with Gyro going out into the Duckburgian desert to test his all-powerful gold detector. After successfully finding little nuggets here and there, the detector begins buzzing as if it has found the Mother Lode! Gyro proceeds to dig an enormous hole only to discover that he has neglected to properly check the depth gauge on the machine. Careful recalculation of the gauge's readings and a re-evaluation of the drawing he has rendered of the buried "golden boulder" reveal to Gyro just how large a mistake he has made.

Re-colored covers to *Four Color* #1095 (Apr/Jun 1960) and *Four Color* #1184 (May/Jul 1961).

ALL ART & COVE
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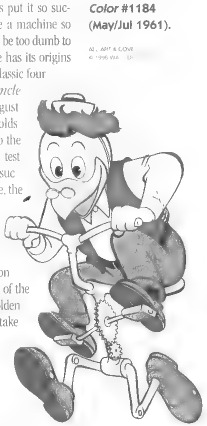


Barks has always enjoyed creating stories showing man's shortcomings when it comes to dealing with technology. Entertaining and amusing examples of this theme can be found in "The Future Forecaster" from *Uncle Scrooge* #16 (December 1956) and "Roscoe, the Robot Servant" appearing in *Uncle Scrooge* #20 (December 1957). A noteworthy side-light to the "Gold Finder" tale is Gyro's little Helper, (who is virtually ignored throughout this and

Gyro's gizmos

1. Pogo-Stick Butter Churner ("Gladstone's Secret', 10 pgs., WDC&S #140, May 1952)
2. Jet-Powered Baggage Buggy ('Think Boxes For Animals', WDC&S #141, Jun 1952)
3. Think Box ('Think Boxes For Animals', 10 pgs., WDC&S #141, Jun 1952)
4. Goblin Foiler ("Hobblin' Goblins", 9 pgs., Donald Duck #26, Nov 1952)
5. Anima Voice Box ('Television Quiz Show', 10 pgs , WDC&S #152, May 1953)
6. Trained Worms ('Gyro's Trained Worms', 10 pgs., WDC&S #153, Jun 1953)
7. Imprevi-Wax ('Impervi-waxing the Money Bin', 10 pgs., WDC&S #171, Dec 1954)
8. Power Plant ('Lightning Power Plant', 4 pgs., Uncle Scrooge #13, Mar 1956)
9. Foam Stone ('The Spite Fence', 4 pgs., Uncle Scrooge #14, Jun 1956)
10. Cat Language Translator ('The Cat Translator', 4 pgs., Uncle Scrooge #15, Sep 1956)
11. Predicting Machine ("The Future Forecaster', 4 pgs , Uncle Scrooge #16, Dec 1956)
12. Noiseless Rocket Engine ("Grandma's Present", 8 pgs , Christmas Parade #8, Dec 1956)
13. Formula For Growing Fur On Doorknobs ("Grandma's Present", Christmas Parade #8, Dec 1956)
14. Future Picture Camera ("Grandma's Present", Christmas Parade #8, Dec 1956)
15. Hay-To-Milk Machine ("Grandma's Present", Christmas Parade #8, Dec 1956)
16. Dirt-To-Food Machine ("Grandma's Present", Christmas Parade #8, Dec 1956)
17. Imagining Machine ('Bigger And Bigger', 10 pgs , WDC&S #199, Apr 1957)
18. Spot Remover ('Gyro's Super Dye', 10 pgs., WDC&S #201, Jun 1957)
19. Gold Detector ("The Gold Finder', 4 pgs., Uncle Scrooge #18, Jun 1957)
20. Outdoor Carpet Sweeper ("Picnic", 6 pgs., Picnic Party #8, Jul 1957)
21. Dishes With Adjustable Legs ("Picnic", Picnic Party #8, Jul 1957)
22. Storm Proof House ("Picnic", Picnic Party #8, Jul 1957)
23. Windmill Drive ('Uncle Scrooge Goes To Disneyland', Gyro's Grandfather, Ratchet Gearloose, appears, 20 pgs , Uncle Scrooge Goes To Disneyland #1, Aug 1957)
24. Inflatable House ('Inflated House', 4 pgs., Uncl Scrog #19, Sep 1957)
25. Thought Controlled Robot ("Roscoe, The Robot Servant', 4 pgs., Uncle Scrooge #20, Dec 1957)
26. Steam-Powered Rocket Ship ("August Accident", 4 pgs , Mickey Mouse Almanac #1, Dec 1957)
27. Electric Scarecrow ('Scarecrows', 3 3/4 pgs , Uncle Scrooge #21, Mar 1958)
28. Rocket Ship ("Rocket Race', 10 pgs , WDC&S #212, May 1958)
29. Thought Reading Machine ('Bird Thought Reader Machine', 4 pgs., Uncle Scrooge #22, Jun 1958)
30. Safety Trampoline Swim Net ("The New Swimming Pool", 4 pgs., Uncle Scrooge #23, Sep 1958)
31. Forbidium ('Forbidium And The Money Bin', 16 pgs., Disneyland Birthday Party #1, Oct 1958)
32. Cyclone Warning Bell ("The Cyclone Detector', 4 pgs., Uncle Scrooge #24, Dec 1958)
33. Wishing Well ("The Wishing Well', 4 pgs., Uncle Scrooge #25, Mar 1959)
34. Life Creating Formula ("Krankenstein Gyro", 4 pgs , Uncle Scrooge #26, Jun 1959)
35. Honest-To-Goodness Weather Predictor ("Weather Watchers", 7 pgs., FC #1010, Jul 1959)
36. Fish Catcher ("Fun? What's That?", 10 pgs , Summer Fun #2, Aug 1959)
37. Apple Picker ("On The Dream Planet", 6 pgs., FC #1025, Aug 1959)
38. Firefly Tracker ("The Firefly Tracker", 4 pgs., Uncle Scrooge #27, Sep 1959)
39. Hair Growing Tonic ('Black Wednesday', 10 pgs., WDC&S #230, Nov 1959)
40. Smile Suspender ("The Gab Muffler", 10 pgs , FC #1047, Nov 1959)
41. Silencing Machine ("The Gab Muffler", 10 pgs., FC #1047, Nov 1959)
42. Bike Saucer ("The Stubborn Stork", 8 pgs., FC #1047, Nov 1959)
43. Hi fi Music Box ("Milktime Melodies", 7 pgs , FC #1047, Nov 1959)
44. Goo Lamps ("The Lost Rabbit Foot", 6 7/8 pgs., FC #1047, Nov 1959)
45. Super-Powered Camera ("The Bird Camera", 1 pg., FC #1047, Nov 1959)
46. Closed Circuit Television ("The TV Babysitter" Invention only-no Gyro app. , 6 pgs., FC #1055, Nov 1959)
47. Mousetrap & Bait ("The Inventors' Contest", 4 pgs., Uncle Scrooge #28, Dec 1959)
48. Super Snow Chaser ("The Snow Chaser", 6 pgs., FC #1073, Jan 1960)
49. Flying Sled ("Knights Of The Flying Sleds", 10 pgs , WDC&S #233, Feb 1960)
50. Super Powerboat

(continued on page 35)

many other Gyro stories as if Gyro didn't even notice that he was present) and his madcap run-ins with the denizens of the desert!

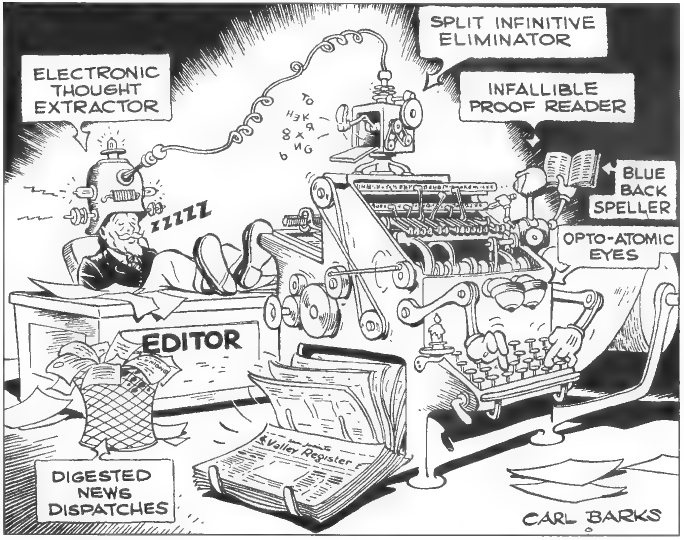
Whether Gyro conducts his experiments in the Duckburg desert or on top of Uncle Scrooge's Kill Motor Hill, the populous of Duckburg always manages to forgive him for the damage and mayhem that often ensues. They know that Gyro has their welfare and well-being in mind. That's because the populous of Duckburg are a forgiving lot… they know that Gyro has his heart in the right place, even though the results of his well-intentioned inventions often go astray and wreak havoc on their fair hamlet. Gyro sees a problem and wants to solve it… not because there will be a reward… but, like Sir Edmund Hillary allegedly said when asked why he wanted to climb Mt. Everest "…because its there!"

Collectors and fans of "The Old Duck Man" acknowledge many debts owed to Carl Barks'… the least of which is inventing the inventor! Besides delightful and inspiring entertainment, Barks has filled the audacious adventures of Gyro Gearloose with insights into his own moral code .. a code that has supported him throughout his long and illustrious career. Fans will always be inspired by the wizardry of Carl Barks and Gyro Gearloose… Duckburg's "Thomas Edison" of comedic contraptions and magnificent madcap machines! ■

Special thanks to Greg Pharis, David Yaruss, Tom Horvitz, Tom Andrae and the gang at Gladstone/Hamilton Company.

Michael Naiman has been a regular contributor since CBM *#8, was a founding member and officer of the American Association of ComicBook Collectors, former pricing editor for* Overstreet's Comic Book Monthly, *advisor to the* Grading Guide *and lives-and breathes Uncle Scrooge collectibles.*

"I'm an inventor at heart," Barks once explained. "I can think of all kinds of crazy inventions. I would go broke if I ever tried to patent all the things I think of." Barks "developed" the editors machine for the San Jacinto Valley Register in 1948, years before Gyro first appeared.



CARL BARKS'

First Fan Foto

When research information is needed concerning facts about Carl Barks and his voluminous amount of work, its reassuring to know that there is someone you can always count on to come through for you. Who is this you ask? Why it's "Duckdom's" Number One Fan... Malcolm Willits. Universally recognized as the first person to obtain Carl's address from the Disney studio in 1957, Malcolm generously shared this information with the legion of fans who had come to realize that there was something very special about "The Good Duck Artist."

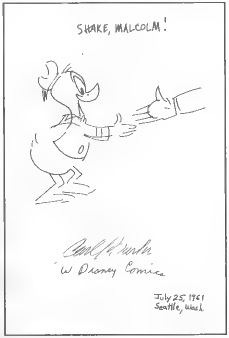
In the course of making graphic reproductions for various articles in this issue of CBM, I had the opportunity to call Malcolm and ask for his assistance. He graciously agreed to loan me one of his precious bound volumes... and Rev. Ed Bergen transported the precious cargo to San Diego from the Los Angeles area.

Photo by M. Gerstein

As we set about the task of making photocopies, Ed and I took a few minutes to look through the amazing volume. It was then that I came to realize what a magnificent, and valuable tome I was holding! Bound in black leather were the following phenomenal issues: Four Color #9 "Donald Duck Finds Pirate Gold"; Four Color #29 "Mummy's Ring"; Four Color #62 "Frozen Gold"; Four Color 108 "Terror of the River"; Four Color #147 "Volcano Valley"; Four Color #159 "The Ghost of the Grotto"; and Four Color #178 "Christmas on Bear Mountain." Further examination revealed all three March Of Comics issues (#4, #20 and #41); The 1943 Walt Disney Comics And Stories Christmas Giveaway from Sears; and the Firestone Tire Christmas Giveaways from 1945-1949.

But most priceless of all were the two drawings that appeared at the beginning of the book. Carl had "signed" the page for Malcolm upon the occasion of their first meeting on July 25th, 1961, in Seattle Washington.

Incredibly, the other drawing was penned by none other than the esteemed Jack Hannah, Carl's collaborator on "Pirate Gold!" For the "true Barks believer" it doesn't get too much better than this!



Early duck fan, Malcolm Willits, greets Carl Barks and Gare Barks on the occasion of their first meeting... July 25, 1961, Seattle Washington. The sketch at right (seen here for the first time) is Carl's first fan drawing... and is part of Malcolm's personal bound volume (LEFT).

GYRO'S GIZMO INVENTORY

(Continued from page 32)

("Oodles Of Oomph", 4 pgs., Uncle Scrooge #29, Mar 1960)

51. Moose Caller ("The Call Of The Wild", 1 pg , FC #1095, Apr 1960)

52. Encyclopedia Soup ("Cave Of The Winds", 10 pgs., FC #1095, Apr 1960)

53. Self-Feeding, Power-Squirting Concrete Mixer ("Mixed-Up Mixer", 7 pgs., FC #1095, Apr 1960)

54. Magnetic Attractor ("The Madball Pitcher", 8 pgs., FC #1095, Apr 1960)

55. Bear Repellent ("The Bear Tamer", 7 pgs , FC #1095, Apr 1960)

56. Home Shoe-Shiner ("His Shining Hour", 1 pg , FC #1095, Apr 1960)

57. War Paint ("War Paint", 4 pgs., Uncle Scrooge #30, Jun 1960)

58. Fish Spy Suit ("Fishy Warden", 4 pgs., Uncle Scrooge #31, Sep 1960)

59. Super-Lifting Balloon Gas ("Balloonatics", 10 pgs., WDC&S #242, Nov 1960)

60. Voodoo Power ("That Small Feeling", 4 pgs., Uncle Scrooge #32, Dec 1960)

61. Trained Remora Fish ("Missile Fizzle", 10 pgs., WDC&S #244, Jan 1961)

62. Pet-Talkie Phone ("The Day The Farm Stood Still", 6 pgs., FC #1161, Feb 1961)

63. Tree Tonic ("You Can't Win", 4 pgs , Uncle Scrooge #33, Mar 1961)

64. Electronic Ice Dissolver ("The Madcap Mariner", 10 pgs , WDC&S #247, Apr 1961)

65. School Bell For Fish ("The Madcap Mariner", WDC&S #247, Apr 1961)

66. Talking Nose Cone ("The Nose Knows", 1 pg , FC #1184, May 1961)

67. Puff Mobile ("Monsterville", 10 pgs., FC #1184, May 1961)

68. Pogo Seat & Cube Game ("The Cube", 5 pgs., FC #1184, May 1961)

69. Smart Machine & Power Box ("Mighty But Miserable", 7 pgs., FC #1184, May 1961)

70. Thinking Cap ("Brain Strain", 7 pgs., FC #1184, May 1961)

71. Futuristic Car ("The Oldtimer", 1 pg., FC #1184, May 1961)

72. Walking Trash Can ("Mechanized Mess", 1 pg., FC #1184, May 1961)

73. Nucleonic Linear Emisser-Transporter Machine ("Stranger Than Fiction", 10 pgs., WDC&S #249, Jun 1961)

74. Plastic Tube Scope ("Wily Rival", 4 pgs , Uncle Scrooge #34, Jun 1961)

75. Hydraulic Ramjet Peanut Butter Spreader ("Wily Rival", Uncle Scrooge #34, Jun 1961)

76. Survival Kit ("Fast Away Castaway", 4 pgs., Uncle Scrooge #35, Sep 1961)

77. Jet Sky Stick ("Jet Witch", 10 pgs., WDC&S #254, Nov 1961)

78. Ray Diverter ("Duckburg's Day Of Peril", 4 pgs., Uncle Scrooge #36, Dec 1961)

79. Electronic Bread Toaster ("The Great Pop Up", 4 pgs., design change of The Little Helper, Uncle Scrooge #37, Mar 1962,

80. Fruit Tree Potion ("Madcap Inventors", 3 3/4 pgs., Uncle Scrooge #38, Jun 1962)

81. Fish Hypnotizer ("Finny Fun", 4 pgs , Uncle Scrooge #39, Sep 1962)

82. Buffalo Powered Treadmill ("Buffaloed By Buffaloes", 4 pgs., FC #1267, Dec 1962)

83. Sleeping Gas Pants ("Posthasty Postman", 4 pgs , Uncle Scrooge #40, Jan 1963)

84. Mailbox Stretcher ("Posthasty Postman", Uncle Scrooge #40, Jan 1963)

85. Super Pogo Stick ("Posthasty Postman", Uncle Scrooge #40, Jan 1963)

86. Snow Dissolver ("Snow Duster", 4 pgs., Uncle Scrooge #41, Mar 1963)

87. Rocket Belt & Portable Sprayer ("A Helpers Helping Hand", 4 pgs , Uncle Scrooge #46, Dec 1963)

88. Salmon Lure ("Jonah Gyro", 4 pgs , Uncle Scrooge #48, Mar 1964)

89. Electronic Answering Machine ("The Pied Piper Of Duckburg", 8 pgs., Uncle Scrooge Adv. #21, May 1990)

90. Super Cheese ("The Pied Piper Of Duckburg", 8 pgs., Pages 1-3 written & penciled by Barks and inked by Rosa, Pages 4-8 written. penciled, & inked by Rosa, Uncle Scrooge Adv. #21, May 1990) ■

Unpublished sketch by Barks

15 HARD-TO-FIND BARKS BOOKS!

1. Four Color #9 (Aug 1942, Barks 1st publ comic book work featuring Donald Duck) $7,200

2. March of Comics nn (#4, 1947, "Maharajah Donald") $6,500

3. Four Color #29 (Sep 1943, Classic story "Mummy's Ring") $6,000

4. March of Comics #20 (1948, Classic story "Darkest Africa"; later banned) $3,600

5. March of Comics #41 (1949, "Race to the South Seas") $3,500

6. Walt Disney's Comics & Stories #31 (Apr 1943, First Barks drawn 10 pg story in this title) $2,500

7. Vacation Parade #1 (Jul 1950, 55 pgs. of Barks art, 2nd highest priced Dell Giant) $1,200

8. Four Color #178 (Dec 1947, 1st app of Uncle Scrooge) $1,000

9. Large Feature Book #7, series II (1942, Barks written story, his first publ comic book work, "Pluto Saves the Ship") $1,000

10. Christmas Parade #1 (Nov 1949 , First Dell Giant (132 pages), 25 pgs of Barks art) $825

11. Four Color #386 (Mar 1952, Uncle Scrooge in his own title) $800

12. Four Color #189 (Jun 1948 , First published Barks cover for any comic book) $720

13. Cheerios Premium #Y1 (1947, "Donald Duck & the Atom Bomb", Banked by Disney, 32 pgs, pocket size) $700

14. Top Top Tales #2465 (1960, "Uncle Scrooge the Lemonade King", The only work for which Barks received authorship credit while at Western Publishing) $400

15. Walt Disney's Comics & Stories #95 (Aug 1948, 1st cover for Walt Disney's Comics & Stories) $100

(Note Values based on the 1995 Overstreet Update)

One Mouse, Two Ducks

It seems odd that America's (and maybe the world's) most recognizable and collectible character Mickey Mouse, ended up with one of the famous "white spaces" in the *Photo Journal Guide*. But there were a few Disney books that eluded even the ever vigilant Ernie Gerber. This chapter of Unseen Gold will fill in the blanks for three hard-to-find Disney issues!

BY MATT NELSON & MICHAEL NAIMAN

MMM V1/#4

As it proclaims on its 8 1/2 x 11 1/2 inch cover, *Mickey Mouse Magazine* (Vol. 1 No. 4, December 1935) is "...Fun for the whole family!" The cover features art by the incomparable Otto Messmer. What child wouldn't be lured into picking up this book with the engaging little rodent skating gleefully across the pond?

There has probably never been (and will never be again) a marketing concept that struck to the core of the American family the way Mickey Mouse and his namesake magazine did. Collectors everywhere know the issues contain wonderful gags, stories, and features starring classic Disney favorites. But what many aren't aware of is the massive amount of Disney merchandise featured throughout the entire magazine. It's literally a Disney item extravaganza!

Mickey Mouse Magazine was first produced by Kay Kamen in 1933. Volume 1, number 1 of the first series was released in January 1933 and continued through volume 1 number 9-September 1933. These first issues were distributed through department stores selling Disney character merchandise. The second series of *Mickey Mouse Magazine* began in November 1933 and, like the first contained games, puzzles, jokes, and gags. The numbering system began all over again with the second series, thus, the second volume 1 number 1 is dated November 1933 and ran through volume 2 number 12, October 1935. Twenty-four issues of this second incarnation were produced in all. A space was left vacant on the front and back covers for the name of the local dairy suppliers who distributed the magazines.

The third and final series of *Mickey Mouse Magazine* is the most familiar, attractive and desirable to collect. In 1935, Hal Horne (who edited the second volume of the magazine) approached Kay Kamen with the idea of producing a magazine that would be sold at newsstands and through subscriptions. Horne brought to the table a enormous personal collection of jokes and gags that he had collected during his career as a newspaperman, movie director, and radio scriptwriter. The magazine commenced publishing in the Summer of 1935 (Issue #1) and continuing until volume 5 number 12 (September 1940)

1940 saw the dawning of the age of comic books, and the demand for a magazine format was beginning to wane. Thus, in October of 1940 *Walt Disney's Comics And Stories* picked up where *Mickey Mouse Magazine* left off. In fact, the format of the final issues of *Mickey Mouse Magazine* mirrored that of the "new" *Walt Disney's Comics And Stories*. The first issue of *Walt Disney's Comics And Stories* (Vol. 1, #1) was dated October 1940. And while 252,000 copies of *Walt Disney's Comics And Stories* were initially published, by August of 1942 the circulation number had reached 1,000,000 copies per issue... by March of 1946 2,000,000 copies... and by August of 1951 3,000,000 copies a month! *Walt Disney's Comics And Stories* is still being published today by Gladstone and can truly boast that no other comic book or magazine series in history has had such longevity and popularity.

Large Feature Comic #20

The second book featured in this month's "Unseen Gold" is probably the most difficult and scarce item to find of the three. In an extensive phone calling effort throughout the "duck world" very, very few collectors could say that they owned this book or for that matter knew of anyone who did! The "Donald Duck Comic Paint Book" (*Large Feature Comic* #20) was produced in 1941 by the Dell Publishing Company. Originally printed in black and white, this 51 page book contained reprints of 1940 Taliaferro daily strips with single panels at the top of each page for the children to color. The Gerber scarcity index ranks this at a "7" and thus, one of the most difficult ones to find in the series. According to the *Overstreet Price Guide*, this item is even more difficult to find than the Donald Duck *Large Feature* #16.

1943 Firestone Giveaway

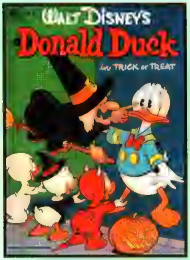
This installment wouldn't be complete without including one the most rare and interesting Carl Barks collectibles around... and it's also missing from Gerber! The 20 page 1943 *Firestone Christmas Giveaway*

(*Firestone Presents Comics*) is an amazingly tough-to-find book! From 1943 to 1949 Firestone Rubber published seven Disney comics to be distributed to their customers during the holiday season. The 1943 and 1944 issues offered Barks reprints from *Walt Disney's Comics And Stories* #32 and #35. As these duck stories proved to be very popular, Barks was asked to write and draw original eight-page stories in the years to follow. The 1943 *Firestone Giveaway* reprinted the Donald Duck story from *Walt Disney's Comics And Stories* #32 (May 1943). This story turns out to be the first scripted and drawn 10-pager that Barks was to create for the *Walt Disney's Comics And Stories* series. His first work in *Walt Disney's Comics And Stories* #31 (Apr 1943) was from a script that was provided to him by the editors at Western.

Not Low Cost

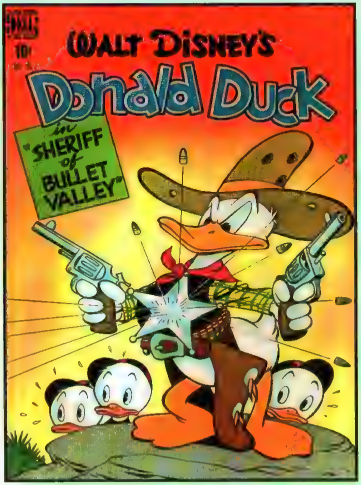
Some "white space" (missing from Gerber) comics are relatively inexpensive because of their anonymity. Unfortunately, these three books do not fall into that category! *Large Feature* #20 in NM (and I'll wager one does not exist in this grade) will set you back at least $4,200 IF you could get it for *Guide*. Not bad for a book of reprint material! The *Mickey Mouse Magazine* has no listing for a NM copy, but the VF value is listed at $525. The 1943 *Firestone Giveaway* is currently valued at $550 in NM condition, but good luck finding one of these too.

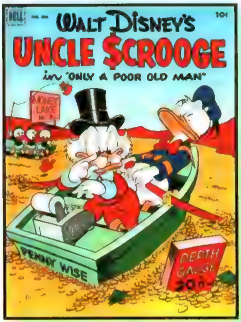
Because these books cross over into the world of Disneyana collectors, your chances of locating these might be inhanced if one scoured the many Disneyana conventions that are held each year. If you enjoy comic book conventions, you're in for a different experience when you go to a large meeting of Mouse aficionados. The hunt for these rarities can be fun and I guarantee you it will be challenging. Keep your Mouse ears tuned to the Disney market… and hopefully you'll run across these "white space" phantoms! ■



"TRICK OR TREAT"
Donald Duck #26 (Nov/Dec 1952).

CARL BARKS' 1ST OIL PAINTING
Walt Disney's Comics & Stories #108 (Sep 1949)

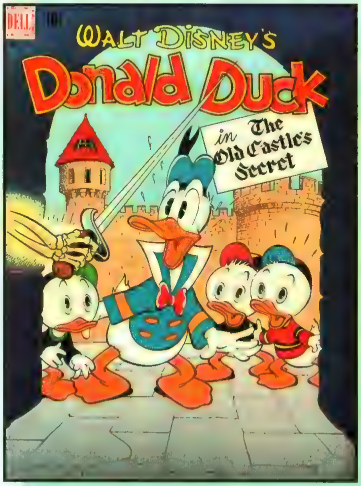


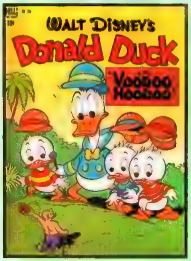


"SHERIFF OF BULLET VALLEY"
Four Color #199 (Oct 1948)

"ONLY A POOR OLD MAN"
Four Color #386 (Mar 1952) Uncle Scrooge series begins.

ORIGINAL COMIC BOOK COVERS © 1996 WESTERN PUBLISHING. COMIC CHARACTERS IMAGES AND NAMES © 1996 WALT DISNEY



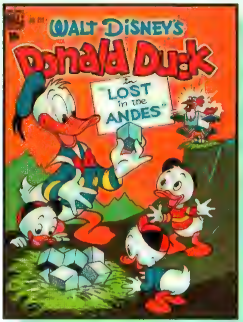


BOMBIE THE ZOMBIE
comes to "life" in the Barks classic "Voodoo Hoodoo" (*Four Color* #238, Aug 1949).

THE FIRST APPEARANCE
of Gyro Gearloose in *Walt Disney's Comics & Stories* #140 (May 1952).

"THE OLD CASTLE'S SECRET"
Four Color #189 (Jun 1948) First cover by Carl Barks.

"LOST IN THE ANDES"
Four Color #233 (Apr 1949) Classic square egg story.



Secrets of the Batcave

Secrets of the Batcave...the first of an exciting series of lithographs officially licensed by DC Comics and produced by Gotham Graphics. The artist is Dick Sprang, a highly respected and popular illustrator of some of Batman's most memorable adventures. Fans will recognize the unique style from numerous BATMAN covers and stories which DC Comics has published and reprinted for more than 50 years.

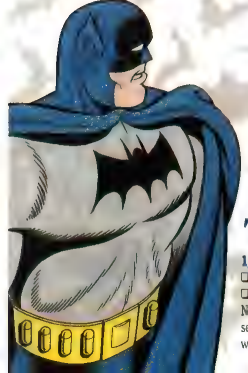
Using dozens of classic 1940s and 1950s references, Mr. Sprang has assembled what is probably the ultimate depiction of the DARK KNIGHT's top-secret underground headquarters and workshop...*the Batcave!* A generous, oversize image area of 23" x 33" makes this extra B-I-G! Personally signed and numbered by Mr. Sprang, these are likely to become highly sought-after.

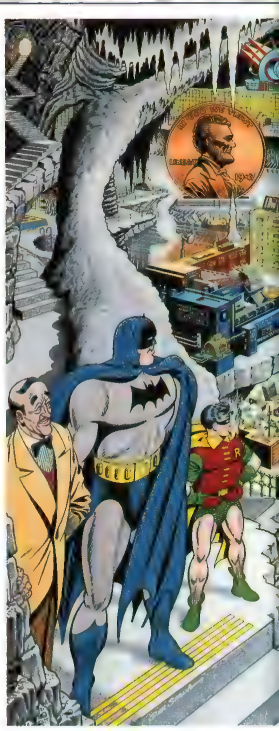
Each lithograph is printed in a continuous tone, with permanent inks and in seven colors for maximum visual impact. Every sheet is acid-free, 100% cotton archival fine art print paper. You will be proud to frame and enjoy *Secrets of the Batcave* at home or in the office. You'll also receive a hand-numbered Certificate of Authenticity and an exclusive brochure about the art and the artist.

Mr. Sprang has thousands of fans worldwide, yet there are only 675 individually numbered lithographs. The press run is strictly limited—these will *never* be printed again. Many prints have already been sold, so don't miss this opportunity to acquire the *very first* Dick Sprang Batman lithograph! Ask your local comics store about purchasing this print through the distributor of your choice or mail your order using the information below. Need it right away? Call and charge your order to MasterCard, VISA, American Express or Discover and we'll ship it today!

SILVER EDITION: LIMITED TO 500 PRINTS
On 175 lb. Porcelaine™ print paper with a smooth white surface. The title and two Bat emblems appear in silver foil along the bottom border. Signed and numbered.

GOLD EDITION: LIMITED TO 175 PRINTS
On heavy 175 lb. Opalesque Keramique™ pearl white print paper which has an opalescent surface with an iridescent quality. Twin BAT EMBLEMS (at the lower left and lower right) and the title are embossed with gold foil. Signed and numbered.





To order:

1) Select which prints you would like to order:
- ❑ **SILVER EDITION LITHOGRAPH** at $450*
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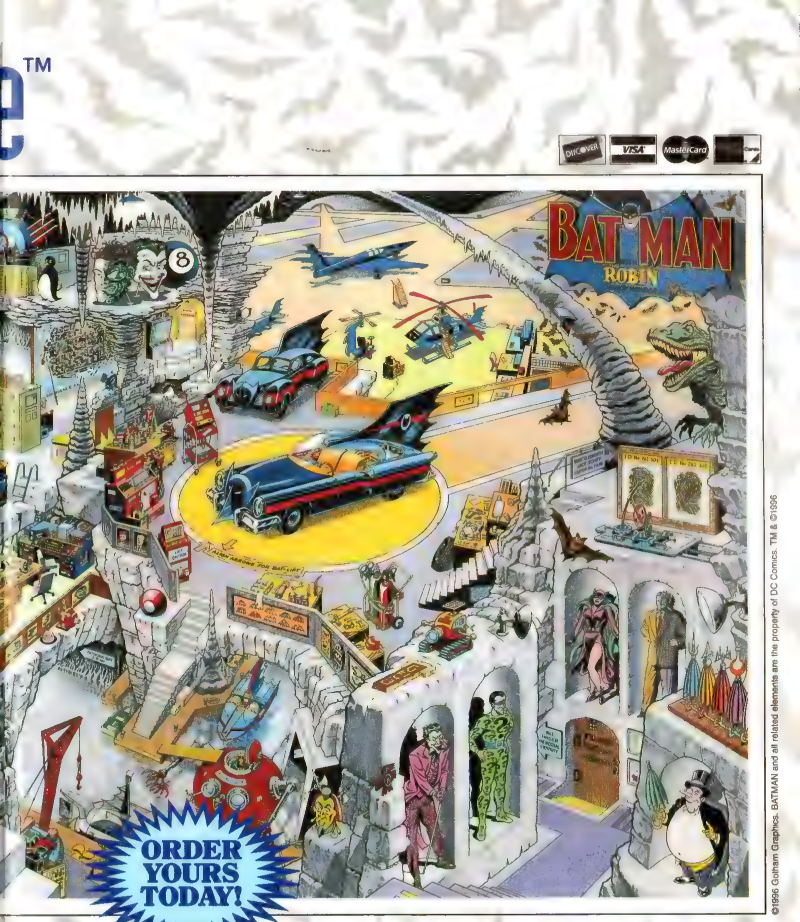

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Detective
COMICS
BATMAN'S KING-SIZED BATARANG IS THE INNER PART OF THE CREATURE WITH THE LONG, RED TAIL! AND WHEN IT'S REMOVED, IT'LL BECOME HARMLESS!
THE CREATURE FROM SPACE!

"The Jigsaw Creatures From Space!" *Detective* #277 (Mar 1960)

"The Mystery Seeds From Space!" *Batman* #124 (Jun 1959)

"The Interplanetary Batman!" *Batman* #128 (Dec 1959)

"The Creature From Planet X!" *Detective* # 270 (Aug 1959)

BATMAN
THE GAS CLOUD FROM THAT GIANT SEED IS DRIFTING TOWARD GOTHAM CITY AND IT'S PETRIFYING EVERYTHING IN ITS PATH!
"The MYSTERY SEEDS from SPACE!"

Detective
COMICS
WE ESCAPED JUST IN TIME, BATMAN! OUR SPECIAL CLUSTER CHUTES WILL BREAK OUR FALL!
The CREATURE from PLANET X!

"The Rainbow Creature!" *Batman* #134 (Sep 1960)

"Bat-Hound and the Creature!" *Batman* #143 (Oct 1961)

Batman's Interplanetary Rival!" *Detective* #282 (Aug 1960)

"The Hand From Nowhere!" *Batman* #130 (Mar 1960)

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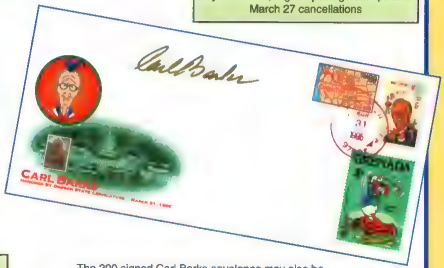
Envelope #1

Limited to 100 numbered envelopes featuring two Disney Stamps and postmarked March 27, 1995, Carl's birthday, at the town of Merrill, Oregon, Carl's birthplace. Also included: a numbered copy of the official community resolution which announces that henceforth, March 31 will be known as "Carl Barks Day" and will be celebrated with appropriate activities, and an original photograph of Carl holding one of the envelopes.

Signed in gold by Carl Barks

ALSO AVAILABLE:
144 unsigned envelopes with unnumbered city resolution, regular postage stamps and March 27 cancellations



Envelope #2

Limited to 100 numbered envelopes featuring two Disney Stamps and postmarked March 31, 1995, at Salem, Oregon, on the occasion of Carl being honored by the Oregon State Legislature.

Also included: a numbered copy of the official Joint Memorial which celebrates "Comic book legend Carl Barks"
probably the first time a state legislature has honored a comic book artist, and an original photograph of Carl holding one of the envelopes.

Signed in gold by Carl Barks

ALSO AVAILABLE:
144 unsigned envelopes with unnumbered joint memorial, regular postage stamps and March 31 cancellations

The 200 signed Carl Barks envelopes may also be "personalized" by having them addressed to the individual names and addresses of the purchasers.

All envelopes contain in the upper left hand corner, the new official Carl Barks caricature as created by the artist himself.

NOTE: Twenty signed and numbered "Publishers Proofs" with Disney Stamps and the two cancellations were also created and given as gifts to those who made this project possible.

Only 200 signed Carl Barks "Event" postal covers and 288 unsigned postal covers are available for Carl's many fans.

Signed set of envelopes #1 and #2 ..... $195.00
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The Golden Age of Carl Barks

By Rob Jaiven

Carl Barks, artist, storyteller extraordinaire, and creator of Donald Duck's Uncle Scrooge (among others), has had a long, illustrious and influential career. Known affectionately by his legion of fans as The Duckman, Barks is especially known for his comic book tales that were originally published during the 1940s through the 1960s. These fantastic stories combine action, adventure, treasure hunting, and comedy... and have a lasting effect on everyone who read them—and even on popular culture itself.

He took his ducks and his fans from the mountains of "Lost in the Andes" to the "Land Beneath the Ground," from the interplanetary "Island in the Sky" to the underwater "Secret of Atlantis," mixing thrills and humor all the way. As a matter of fact, these stories were a direct inspiration for two of Barks' best known fans—Steven Spielberg and George Lucas. Anyone who enjoyed their films (especially Raiders of the Lost Ark) owes a certain amount of gratitude to Barks and his wonderful ideas. When you look at some of the duck story elements, one discovers something akin to a "set of blueprints" for certain portions of these classic adventure films. In the search-for-the-treasure sequence on page 23 from "The Seven Cities of Cibola." (*Uncle Scrooge* #7, September/November 1954) it is clearly similar to the opening concepts seen in "Raiders"... and Carl thought of it years earlier!

The ducks also searched for "The Prize of Pizarro," the "Treasure of Marco Polo" and "The Lost Crown of Genghis Khan." They went "North of the Yukon" and to the "Cave of Ali Baba." In the ancient treasure stories, the intrepid ducks are very often the first visitors in centuries, and the stories usually end with the treasure unrecovered... and often buried for another millennium.

Few realize how much Barks thoroughly researched his many story settings... including the use of encyclopedias and National Geographic magazines to add "realism" to these great fantasy stories. When asked to comment on these ancient tales, Barks remarked, "Archaeology is interesting to practically everybody, and I was striving to get the idea of ancient cultures and places into my stories."

Barks didn't limit himself to the past, however, and just as easily created wonderful imaginative extra-terrestrial adventures. In "Micro-Ducks From Outer Space," Barks introduced us to non-threatening, friendly, vegetarian, aliens in a flying saucer... when this mode of transportation was still a fresh concept!

PREVIOUS PAGE: **an original Carl Barks sketch used in the development of the Scrooge McDuck figurine "Always Another Rainbow".**

***Uncle Scrooge* #7 "The Seven Cities Of Cibola" (Sep/Nov 1954) provided inspiration for the action thriller "Raiders Of The Lost Ark".**

EACH TIME IS RICHER THAN THE ONE BEFORE!
OH, ME! OH, MY! AND I USED TO THINK I WAS RICH!
SOLID RUBY ARROWHEADS.
AND LOOK AT THIS! A BIG FAT IDOL CARVED FROM A SOLID EMERALD!
THAT, BOYS, COULD EASILY BE THE MOST VALUABLE SINGLE OBJECT IN THE WHOLE WORLD!
DON'T TOUCH IT!
THERE'S A PUSH ROD HOOK-UP BACK HERE!... IT'S SOME SORT OF BOOBY TRAP!
SURE ENOUGH! IF THAT IDOL IS MOVED, IT TOPPLES THE ROCK!...
AND THE ROCK WILL KNOCK OUT THAT PILLAR—
WHICH WILL COLLAPSE THAT CLIFF! ...AFTER THAT—HEY! IT'S A DEVICE TO CAVE IN THE ENTIRE CANYON AND BURY THE SEVEN CITIES!
THEY SURE SHOULD HAVE HUNG A 'DO NOT DISTURB' SIGN ON THAT OLD BOY!

In the forward to the book *Uncle Scrooge McDuck—His Life and Times*, George Lucas writes: "My greatest source of enjoyment in Carl Barks' comics is in the imagination of his stories...which are also very cinematic." It's easy to see why both Spielberg and Lucas are avid collectors of Carl Barks art.

The Duckman's Beginnings

Carl Barks was born in Merrill, Oregon, on March 27, 1901... his schooling consisting of eight grades spent in a one-room schoolhouse. At age 15, he began a mail-order cartooning course, but never completed it. As he traveled about, he held numerous jobs, including logger, steelworker, and carpenter. He eventually began writing and drawing—mostly freelancing—for various humor magazines in the early 1930s.

Then in 1935 Carl Barks began working in the story department at Walt Disney Studios. He spent seven years there composing gags and plots for Donald Duck cartoons. He enjoyed the work, but was not entirely happy with the working conditions... especially the air conditioning, which wreaked havoc on his leaky sinuses.

Barks and His Comic Book Stories

In 1942, Barks left and moved to the San Jacinto desert, where the dry air would be kinder to his sinuses. There he raised chickens and went back to freelancing cartoons. Luckily for Barks, the ducks, and his myriad of fans, Western Publishing decided to feature all new Donald Duck material in its *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* comic books. Barks, along with Jack Hannah, drew the story "Donald Duck Finds Pirate Gold" (*Four Color Comics* #9) for Western in 1942 while still at the Disney studio. He was then given a script and was asked to draw a ten-page Donald Duck tale... with permission to revise the script, if necessary. This historic tale entitled Victory Garden was published in *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* #31 (April 1943). For the next 24 years, Barks wrote and drew nearly every single duck story in all Walt Disney's Comics.

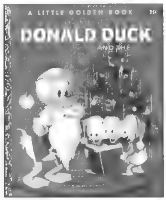
Not only did Carl Barks define and refine the characters, he inherited Donald and his nephews, Huey, Dewey and Louie. He created his own "universe" of characters as well, the roster of which includes inventor Gyro Gearloose, the amazingly lucky Gladstone Gander, villains the Beagle Boys and sorceress Magica de Spell. He also created the happy hamlet of Duckburg, and, most importantly, he created the world's richest, toughest, and most intrepid duck, Donald's Uncle Scrooge McDuck!

Uncle Scrooge led the ducks on the classic Carl Barks adventures. They traveled to Egyptian tombs for "The Mummy's Ring" in *Four Color* #29. They looked for and found "The Old Castle's Secret" in *Four Color* #189. They spent time "In Ancient Persia" (*Four Color* #275), searched for "The Gilded Man" (*Four Color*

#422), and sought out a Viking crown in "The Golden Helmet" (*Four Color* #408).

Perhaps Scrooge's greatest adventure, and certainly the most seminal, is told in the classic tale "Back to the Klondike" (*Four Color* #456). When Scrooge and the boys head north, to clear up an old debt with dance hall queen Glittering Goldie, we finally discover the origins of Uncle Scrooge's fortune and what, in fact, molded his character. We are taken back to the city of Dawson in the Alaskan gold rush of 1898, where the young rough-and-tumble Scrooge finds, is robbed of, and forcibly retrieves The Goose Egg Nugget... the largest piece of gold ever discovered!

Incredibly, the editors at Western deemed what many consider the finest portions of the famous nugget story "inappropriate" because of several panels feared as too violent for Disney and Western Publishing standards. The original story was actually scissored and censored when first published in 1952. (Luckily, these missing panels have since been restored to the original story.)



When Scrooge throws the Goose Egg Nugget down on the bar... astounding the patrons and wiping that sneer off the face of the bartender... it is considered by many to be the defining moment in the personal history of Scrooge McDuck!

The Duck Paintings

Upon retiring in the late 1960s, Carl Barks spent time painting, in oils, mostly landscapes and still life paintings. In 1971, Barks was approached by a fan and was asked to do an oil painting of Donald. Disney gave him permission to do this and other oil paintings of the ducks. From 1971 to 1976 (when Disney withdrew permission due to copyright problems), Barks had completed 122 of these oil paintings. This remarkable body of work is loved worldwide.

The first painting sold in 1971 for the astonishing sum of $150! In contrast, 25 years later Barks' paintings routinely sell in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, with a recent sale for a single Barks oil setting an all-time record at $250,000!

The subject matter for these paintings are the legendary and classic scenes which reprise Barks' covers and his scenes from stories.

One of his favorite subjects for his oils is

Uncle Scrooge's "money bin"... and close to the hearts of many Barks aficionados is the group of nine works known as the Klondike paintings, which are based on the story "Back to the Klondike."

The only surviving pencil sketch from the Little Golden Book story "Donald Duck and the Christmas Carol".

***Uncle Scrooge* #59 (Sep 1965) featuring the Barks classic "North Of The Yukon."**

ALL ART & CHARACTERS © 1996 WALT DISNEY

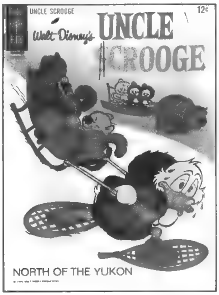
Scrooge's defining moment is immortalized in The Goose Egg Nugget, and when combined with works such as Nobody's Spending Fool, I Found It, I Keep It and Always Another Rainbow establish the young adventurers history that inspires so many fans.

Barks' late wife, Gare (pronounced "Gary"), claimed The Goose Egg Nugget as her favorite of Carl's paintings. While Barks himself usually declines to name his absolute favorite, he came pretty close in a 1984 interview, when he was asked to comment on his favorite paintings.

"I always liked 'The Goose Egg Nugget' very much—it told its own story. The one of Scrooge coming out of Dawson ('Nobody's Spending Fool') is a very close second." Both are Klondike paintings.

The Ghost of Chistmas Past

Occasionally, Barks illustrated stories for non-comic book media. In 1958, he did the pencils for the Little Golden Book story "Donald Duck And The Christmas Carol." Unfortunately, only one pencil drawing is known to have survived



Ye Olde
Wishing
Well

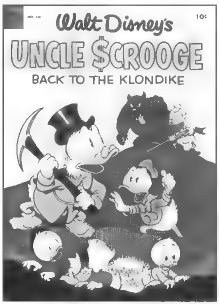
—the scene in the bedroom involving the spirit of Christmas past. It was recovered from a Barks "scrap-heap" in the early 1970s and later finished by Barks in felt tip pen at the request of a fan. In 1980, Barks wrote the prose story "Go Slowly Sands Of Time" and illustrated it with watercolor paintings. This was the first time that Barks-colored art was used for the final illustrations. For the last 15 years, a number of Barks' paintings have been reproduced and released as limited edition lithographs… with phenomenal, worldwide success. In fact, a lithographic print of "The Goose Egg Nugget" has been released. His entire body of comic book work is available in the 30-volume Carl Barks Library.

Worldwide Recognition

Film critic Leonard Maltin writes that "Barks is possibly the most popular and widely read artist writer in the world." In 1994, Carl embarked upon and completed a triumphant seven-week tour through eleven European capitals. From Iceland to Denmark, Norway to Germany, Italy to France, to England and more… Barks was honored by heads of state and fans alike. Accolades continue to pour in.

Barks' acclaim has even become interplanetary! Asteroid "2730 Barks" was official named to honor him and his exotic adventure stories.

His home town of Merrill, Oregon, celebrates Carl Barks Day every March 31st, and the Oregon State Legislature has recently honored him in a Senate Joint Memorial.



At 95 years young, Carl Barks is still going strong. Even with a demanding schedule and numerous new commissions, he still energetically meets and greets old and new fans at conventions and gatherings around the world!

Because his work inspires a whole new generation of comic readers…because his work continues to influence and entertain his world wide legion of fans… and because his work will always contain the charm and imagination that is so unique to Carl Barks… because of all this…the following statement is true today as it will be true 100 years from now… this is truly the Golden Age of Carl Barks! ■

Special thanks to Chey Reynolds, Mistie Smaller, and Collectors' Showcase magazine for permission to reprint this article

FACING PAGE: **Carl Barks beams with delight over the painting "Ye Olde Wishing Well".**

Uncle Scrooge, Huey, Dewey, Louie, Glittering Goldie, and Blackjack the Bear on the cover of *Four Color* #456 (Mar 1953) "Back To The Klondike".

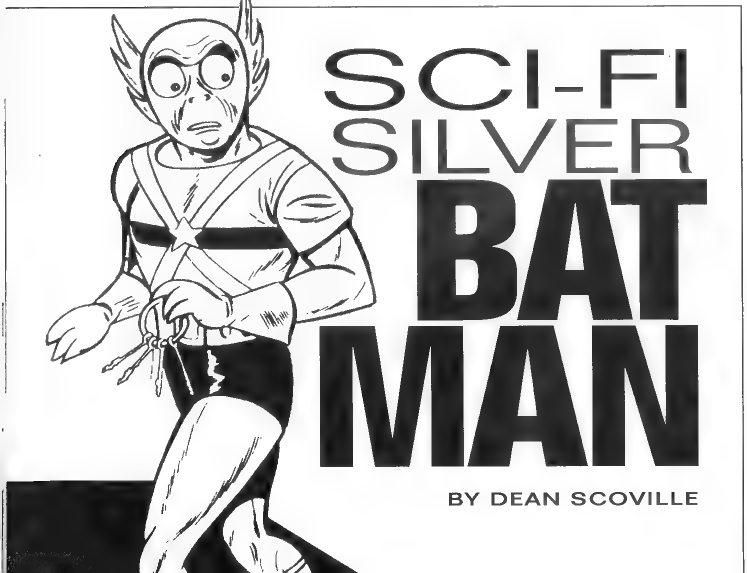
Two panels from "Back To The Klondike"… the defining moment for Scrooge.

The Klondike barroom fight scene at one time deemed too violent for young readers.

"BUT HE DIDN'T SNEER WHEN I EMPTIED MY POKE ON THE BAR, AND HE SAW THE GOOSE EGG NUGGET!"
NOW DO I GET THAT COFFEE?
CLANK
"THAT GOOSE EGG WAS SOME NUGGET, I'M TELLIN' YOU!"
"IT WAS A FIGHT TO BE PROUD OF! IT WAS LIKE A BUZZSAW! MEN FELL IN ROWS LIKE DOMINOES!

In the late 1950s, as Russia's Sputnik One hurled through the stratosphere into earth's orbit, U.S. scientists scrambled to get ahead in the great space race. However, long before Alan Shephard floated in space and Neil Armstrong moonwalked, our favorite winged crusader, Batman, and his space cadet, Robin, routinely waged their own star wars. This should hardly prove surprising in light of the success engendered by the Martian Manhunter backup series in *Detective Comics* and the general space mania of the decade.

When they weren't dueling with aliens from other galaxies, the dynamic duo could likely be found dealing with radioactive creatures, trying out the latest techno-weapons, and solving ever more scientifically complex crimes. Indeed, for a while it seemed the world's greatest detective was bellbent on proving himself the best in the galaxy. While perhaps not the title's most distinguished run, the Batman stories of the late 1950s and early 1960s provide a lasting commentary on society's twin reactions to the technological age: optimism and trepidation. In short, they were fun.



SCI-FI SILVER BAT MAN

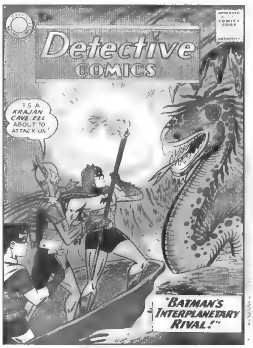
BY DEAN SCOVILLE

Revisiting these issues was like watching "Matinee" starring John Goodman (a very cute and highly recommended film that likewise captures the era). They represent a time wherein the good guys were from close to home and outsiders were not only exotic, they were downright scary and bad for business to boot! Thanks to the merry wonderment of Dick Sprang and Sheldon Moldoff, Batman and Robin were soon playing host to Invaders from Mars... and Jupiter... and Saturn... and Planet X.

Occasionally, these space stories were played for moral parables, illustrating how differing cultures can work in harmony to overcome mutual obstacles. A quintessential example is "Manhunt In Outer Space" (*Batman* #117, August 1958). The pursuit of known thief Eddie Marrow from an atomic plant leads Batman and Robin to an alien criminal named Garr, who promptly ices the daring duo with his freeze gun and befriends the bewildered Marrow. Soon the Universal Police Corps close in on Garr's spaceship and the newly formed crime team escapes to Planetoid X. Batman and Robin are summarily rescued from deep freeze by Chief Inspector Tutian, and the earth-alien police team beam to Planetoid X where they encounter all manner of bizarre flora and fauna during their search for Garr and Marrow.

Despite their combined arsenals of far-out gadgets and gizmos—Batman and Robin's earthly all-terrain batskates (resembling jet propelled rollerblades), miniature Geiger counter, sound recorder, and shark repellent along with Tutian's alien space suspension pellets, snifter birds (like bloodhounds with wings), and underwater breathing discs—it still takes Batman's right jab and Robin's left hook to effect the intergalactic arrest.

Throughout the previous two decades the duo fought more conventional sociopaths. Earth's resident villains soon took a backseat to "space guys". Thus, Batman and Robin's encounter with Tutian set the stage for more frequent visits of strangers from unknown worlds, with Gotham City serving as a galaxial Ellis Island. "The Alien Feud On Earth" (*Batman* #144, December 1961) opens with one of the best lines in the genre: "Great Scott! We've walked right into the middle of two dueling aliens!" Indeed, the normally nonplused Batman is surprised to find the overtly chivalrous Zorb and Hylk dueling for the honor of Rilla, an Uma Thurman lookalike from their own planet. Unfortunately, their understandable zeal to destroy one another is far greater than their marksmanship, and the object of their affections rejects both for their insensitivity



KRAJAN CAVE-EELS, space spiders, and an alien dictator named Zan-Rak are the antagonists of "Batman's Interplanetary Rival!" in *Detective Comics* #282 (Aug 1960). Baby-boomers often point out the cover to this sci-fi classic as one of their most fondly remembered newsstand purchases when comics were still 10¢...

to the earthly damages left in their wake.

The alien migration to earth continued in "The Alien Force Twins!" (*Batman* #148, June 1962), as a group of

10¢
BATMAN
FEB NO. 113
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
Featuring "BATMAN-SUPERMAN of PLANET X!"
THEIR RAY GUNS CAN'T HARM ME--ON THIS PLANET I'M A SUPER-ENTHUSIAST!

LOOK... up in the sky... it's a bird, it's a plane... no, it's "Batman, the Superman of Planet X!" *Batman* #113 (Feb 1958) featured one of Batman's most bizarre cases, the concept perfectly uniting both the 1950s sci-fi mania and DC's biggest money maker, Superman, at the apex of his television popularity.

entrepreneurial green men transports an entire city to our world in search of rare minerals. When Batman and Robin stumble upon the covert operation, they are assaulted by two spiraling columns of energy that take on their likenesses and relentlessly pursue the duo. It's not long before the good guys discover the aliens' vulnerability to water and give them a Wicked-Witch-of-the-West baptismal, cleansing themselves of their destructive doubles.

Of course, not all extra-terrestrial visitors to Gotham City were malevolent (which explains E.T. and, for the older crowd, Uncle Martin). Yet another alien field trip goes awry in "Teacher From The Stars" (*Batman* #137, February 1961). As far as aliens go——and they go pretty far——this teacher and his intergalactic brat pack are of the "We come in peace. Take me to your leader" variety. Relatively benign, the visitors from Planet Siga nevertheless stir up resident Gothamites with their idea of fun and games. Despite their shenanigans, no lasting harm is done by story's end and the students and their mentor depart Earth on friendly terms. Nevertheless, the Earth-Siga student exchange program never did get off the ground.

The tale of another misguided being was told in The Martian from Gotham City (*Batman* #132, June 1960). This time, a human actor with amnesia is convinced that he is an alien from Mars (as opposed a mere Venusian; must have been the "I'd Rather Be On the Angry Red Planet" bumper sticker on his spaceship). This would-be invader is armed with a multitude of cinematic special effects weapons for his mission to wage battle against all earthlings. He even fools the dynamic duo of his true identity... for a while.

Batman produced his own thespian adventure in "The Alien Batman" (*Detective* #251, January 1958). The stage is set when Vicky Vale photographs two of this story's villains, one dressed as Batman and the other as an alien. Review headlines soon have Gothamites believing that Batman is himself an alien. In the final act, Batman sheds his mask and cowl in front of a group of gangsters to reveal——an alien! Convinced that he is a true alien, the gang takes Batman to their leader. Batman soon captures their fake spaceship, shuts down their operation, and it's curtains for these bad guys!

Batman was ill-suited for interplanetary adventures of his own, which resulted in some pretty convoluted measures to get him "out there". Unlike Superman (strange visitor from another planet, who, disguised as Clark Kent, used his alien birthright to an unfair advantage in routinely venturing to and from space like so many Las Vegas weekends), the terrestrial Batman was plunged into extraterrestrial exploits that didn't always ring true. In fact, many of these sci-fi Bat-stories seem little more than "fish out of water" variants of one kind or another.

In "The Eighth Wonder Of Space" (*Batman* #140, June 1961), our globe trotting duo venture into DC Comics' equivalent of the Bermuda Triangle where they are zapped into another galaxy, the accidental abductees of——surprise——space aliens. The atmosphere on the foreign planet contorts Batman and Robin's bodies into alien shapes mirroring their captors (when in Rome...?). Upon their return to earth, still sporting the effects of their alien vacation, they find Gothamites aghast, unsure whether they are the dynamic duo or Dennis Rodman and Erkel. The effects wear off soon enough, causing new problems for the now maskless Batman. A last minute editorial reprieve is granted (in the form of yet another convoluted alien) as Batman pulls a Houdini and Gotham City and Batman's identity are safe once again.

In "Prisoners Of Three Worlds" (*Batman* #153,

February 1963) the entire Bat-crew (Batman, Batwoman, Robin, and Bat-Girl) find themselves extradited to another planet. To avoid capture by the crime-fighting quartet, a silver-stealing alien (named Karn) zaps Robin and Bat-Girl to his own planet where they quickly thwart Karn's cohorts' attempt to overthrow their government. Meanwhile, the blast also transports Batman and Batwoman's amorphous energies to the distant planet, leaving their physical shells behind to struggle with Karn. This three-part story is packed with death-defying acts and ingenious solutions. Ultimately, Batman and Batwoman are themselves united and together reunited with Bat-Girl and Robin... but not before Karn and his accomplices are sent home to face the music.

EXPLORER FROM OUTER SPACE crash lands on planet Earth in *Detective Comics* #277 (Mar 1960). Batman eventually neutralized the escaped "Jigsaw Creature From Space" (the Kraal), saves the Earth from eminent destruction, and defends the alien visitor from the wrath of an angry mob.

Of course, not all alien encounters are incarnate. Close on the heels of the film classic "Invasion Of The Body Snatchers" was the story "Mystery Seeds From Space" (*Batman* #124, June 1959). A mysterious "landing" on the outskirts of Gotham City sends local farmers running for cover and shotguns. Our heroes arrive on the scene to find one giant pod emitting nerve-shattering sound waves and another releasing clouds of petrifying gas (must have been that stop at Taco Bell). Combining their considerable deductive wits, the duo soon realizes that none of their human foes are clever enough to create these seemingly indestructible weapons, leaving only one logical explanation: "Those seeds came from somewhere in outer space!..."

Proof of Batman's theory is found when a third seed "hatches" an alien robot whose sole mission is to protect and repair the other two. Upon dispensing with the menacing mystery seeds, Batman surmises that they must have been sent to earth by mistake (or by UPS...or both) Gotham City is safe! But only for a moment... Another "Mystery Gadget From The Stars" (*Batman* #151, November 1962) is found on a Gotham hillside. In this Jumanji-esque tale, the ancient gadget mutates everything (in the path of its ray) into a futuristic form, transforming once-meek critters into giant, menacing porcupines, rabbits, and rodents. Judging by the fierce scowl sported by a gargantuan lamb, humans may be in real trouble in the distant future.

Batman and Robin also confronted bizarre creatures of earthly origins, typically the result of radiation or chemical exposure. A gang of South American rebels harness the powers of "The Rainbow Creature" (*Batman* #134, September 1960) to gain control of a small village. While the creature's red and blue auras were typically used to burn or freeze nearby objects, its true power emanated from its green aura, which turned Batman and Robin into two-dimensional paper dolls. Similarly, The Strange Experiment of Dr. Dorn (*Batman* #154, March 1963) gives rise to a hulking, yet highly intelligent, creature that terrorizes the laboratory of Dr. Dorn. This Jekyll and Hyde monster, once infected by alien microbes from a fallen meteorite, is actually Dr. Dorn. Luckily (yet predictably), Batman finds the secret to both monsters' powers and restores peace and order.

More thematic villainy arose in "The Menace Of The Planet Master" (*Detective* #296, October 1961), as Batman's latest nemesis mimics the attributes of the solar system in executing a series of crimes and escapes. The Planet Master turns out to be a respected professor acting under the influence of meteor gas to create a series of crime-gadgets. Using fire (Mercury), mist (Venus), and blazing rings (Saturn), he raises havoc among Gotham

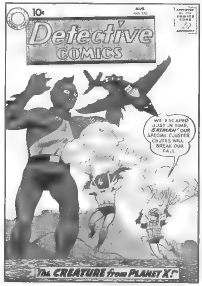
I AM AN EXPLORER--RETURNING TO MY NATIVE WORLD AFTER CAPTURING THE KRAAL, A DANGEROUS CREATURE FROM ANOTHER PLANET! IT FELL OUT WHEN THE SHIP CRASHED!

merchants and the police before coming to his senses and putting his gear back in the closet with the rest of his skeletons. Of course, Batman wasn't a one-man army, and had plenty of help in these alien escapades. His supporting cast included Bat-Hound, Bat-Mite, and best of all, Bat-Ape! Only Bat-Hound possessed enough intuition to recognize the true

CREATURE FROM PLANET X from *Detective Comics* #270 (Aug 1959) is a classic silver sci-fi Batman story that debuted the Bat-Missile!

FANTASTIC WOULD-BE CONQUERORS from another world astride alien steeds menace Batman, Robin, Batwoman, & Batgirl in "Prisoners of three worlds" from 1962.

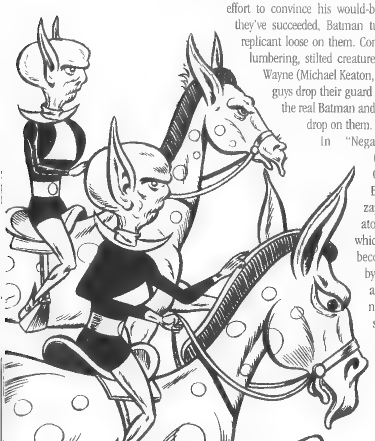
Batman and Robin in "The Eighth Wonder Of Space" (*Batman* #143, October 1961) or to realize that the Creature was not merely a destructive force but an innocent ally who was accidentally beamed to earth (probably part of that errant UPS package).



Bat-Mite, impish crime-fighter from another dimension, idolized Batman and went batty over Batwoman, but just couldn't seem to control his mischievous urges. Possessing the id of Jim Carrey on speed, Bat-Mite's adventures are most notably documented in "Batwoman's Publicity Agent" (*Batman* #133, August 1960) and "The Bat-Mite Bandits" (*Detective* #289, March 1961).

Last but not least, we have "Mogo The Bat-Ape" (*Batman* #114, March 1958), a well-trained circus acrobat whose talents are exploited by a manipulative trainer determined to make off with the circus's earnings. Mogo escapes from his cage and follows Batman and Robin to the Batcave. Donning a cape and hood, Mogo apes Batman's actions, ultimately rescuing both Batman and Robin from the circus thieves.

When neither human, alien, simian, nor canine backup was available, Batman relied upon a robot replacement as in "Batman, Robot!" (*Detective* #281, July 1960). In an effort to convince his would-be assassins that they've succeeded, Batman turns his robotic replicant loose on them. Convinced that this lumbering, stilted creature can't be Bruce Wayne (Michael Keaton, maybe), the bad guys drop their guard long enough for the real Batman and Robin to get the drop on them.



In "Negative Batman" (*Detective* #284, October 1960), Batman gets zapped by an atomic camera which causes him to become weakened by light, "just like a photographic negative." Dispositionally speaking, he's fine considering the circumstances, but neither modern medicine nor technology nor electrical therapy bring positive results. Just when it appears that Batman has once again left himself vulnerable to a photographic coup de grace, he pulls the Batman Robot out of the moth balls once again and has it absorb a second zapping by the camera. Will we ever see a black and white Batman again? We'll just have to see what develops…

Batman and Robin's sci-fi travels weren't limited to distant galaxies either. In several pre-crisis issues, the duo transcends time, space, and logic in futuristic tales of Batman II and Robin II. In "The Son Of The Joker" (*Batman* #145, February 1962), the future pair participate in a series of athletic maneuvers against the chip off the old blockhead, including a chariot race against the clown like Ben Hur. This figment of Alfred's fertile imagination culminates in an all out brawl pitting fathers and sons against one another. Even in the future, Batman and Robin get the last laugh.

While this series lasted, we were taken on a monthly joyride through a science fiction labyrinth. Along the way, we met "Batman's Robot Guardian" (*Batman* #142, September 1961), "Invaders From The Past" (*Batman* #149, August 1962), and "The Plants Of Plunder" (*Batman* #147, May 1962). The space-age Batman would eventually give way to the "new-look" Batman, who was leaner, meaner, and a whole lot more "down-to-earth." Batman's attentions would return to vehicular pursuits, detective work, and costumed villains, as the Silver Age re-introduced Catwoman, the Penguin, and the Riddler … all displacing the duo's imaginative cadre of interstellar adventures and interplanetary rivals.

What better way to conclude a fantastic run than with the classic Robin Dies at Dawn (*Batman* #156, May 1963). At first this seems like yet another Batman space adventure, but it's actually an artificial environment induced and controlled by scientists. Emotionally drawn and physically weakened, Batman believes he has caused Robin's death at the hands of an alien creature. As the dream-like events are played out in reality, concerns that Batman might actually fail to save Robin seem warranted. Not surprisingly, this Sheldon Moldoff classic made the cut as one of *The Greatest Batman Stories Ever Told*! In the end, Batman characteristically comes through and saves Robin in the nick of time.

Some things will never change ■

THE STRANGE CASE OF THE RIOTOUS ROBOTS!

A FEW FUNNY ANIMAL CLASSICS GO BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES OF KID'S STUFF!

BY PAT S. CALHOUN

SINCE KARL CAPEK COINED THE TERM EARLY IN the century, robots have stood as the symbols of the industrial revolution's fruition. Modern science fiction includes many classic novels and short stories about robots- both those in praise of the mechanical marvels and those written as warnings of how technology might lead us awry. Comic books have contributed their share of great robot yarns: certainly, "Judgment Day", the EC story where a planet of orange and blue robots serves as a metaphor for judging people by the color of their skin, is forgotten by few who read it. And comic books have excelled at the humorous robot story, as a look at the following pair of Disney comics will demonstrate. These two robot novels, starring Mickey Mouse and Uncle Scrooge, also show how far "funny animal" comics can go beyond the boundaries of "kid's stuff".

Dick Moores' Super-Computer

"Goofy's Mechanical Wizard" (Mickey Mouse *Four Color* #401 June/July 1952), despite a cute vaguely humanoid appearance and an endearing "personality", is a computer, a thinking machine of such power that it can predict the future. The adding machine that Goofy was building blows up and in the resulting explosion is transformed into a robot super-computer. Mickey and Goofy take it to a boxing match and are amazed when it picks the winner before the fight begins. But a con artist on the make is seated near them in the crowd, and he too, takes note of the machine's abilities. He follows the pair (trio?) back to Goofy's house and watches through the window as the perky processor predicts the outcome of a football game they're watching on television.

When Mickey leaves, the crook catches the little robot with a magnet on a string–while Goofy's got his head in the refrigerator. It turns out that the thief works for a phony fortune-teller, who has big plans for the deductive device. How the robot gets rescued- more of less- is information that those smart enough to go out and buy the book will acquire; the story concludes in a conventional yet satisfying manner, with Mickey, Goofy, the crooks, and the Mechanical Wizard itself all acting as consistent and charming characters. This is a complete 20-page short novel, not so much funny as whimsical, but thoroughly imagined and detailed. The story was drawn (and perhaps written) by Dick Moores, an old pro in both newspaper strips and comic books. Moores also drew "The Wonderful Whizzix", a somewhat similar tale of super-machines that appeared in *Four Color* #427.

Barks' Equine Automatons

While the Mickey Mouse novel "Goofy's Mechanical Wizard" is as witty and amusing as one could hope for, "The Headless Horseman" (*Uncle Scrooge* #66 November 1966) is all that and more. This is because Uncle Scrooge's creator/writer/artist Carl Barks is one of the supreme geniuses of the comic book medium, and some collectors say the series of novels that comprise *Uncle Scrooge* #1-#70 are his towering achievement. Barks' novelistic structure usually builds towards a hilarious climax, many of which are memorable scenes of comic mayhem, as is definitely the case here.

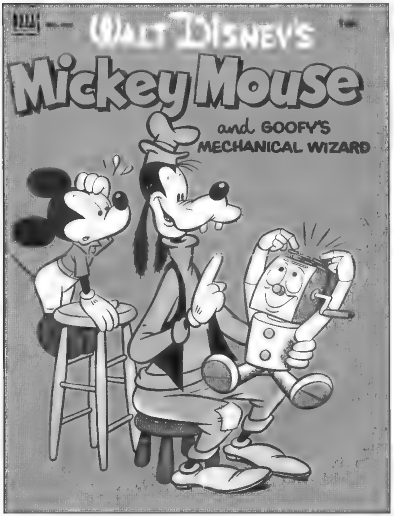
The web-footed multi-zillionaire indulges himself in the purchase of a prize race horse just before the annual "Duckburg Derby". "Fireball", who's won the two previous Derbys, is soon revealed to be a robot. However, Huey, Dewey, and Louie, spying in the stables, discover that all the contenders are automatons.

Then the Beagle Boys come in with a plan to blow open Scrooge's money bin with a bomb while everyone's at the Derby. And "jockey" Donald, who Scrooge has had to equip with blinders and earmuffs (because Donald gets distracted by cheering crowds), ends up with the bomb as a weight in his saddle blanket. The scene of Donald at the Derby, racing around the deserted track (everyone else has fled in panic, but Donald can't hear the announcer's warnings about the bomb), is a totally-realized orgy of comic suspense. When Donald rips off the headgear, saying, "Phooey on Uncle Scrooge! I'm going to enjoy the last few seconds of this race!"...it is a wonderful moment.

This zany 24-pager is one of the last Barks Scrooge stories. The final Barks novel, "The Doom Diamond", appeared in *Uncle Scrooge* #70, only four issues later, the end of 25 solid years of Barks Duck Tales. Comic book historians should keep this in mind when casting about for events that mark the end of the Silver Age.

Uncle Scrooge #66 also contains a reprint of one of the great Gyro Gearloose 4-pagers. The chronicles of the cornball inventor display Barks' mastery of this short form. Gyro wants to use his mind-reading machine to find out why birds sing. But first the inept experimenter must catch a bird... Gyro's light-bulb-headed "Helper" is also a marvelous contraption/creature, an imp of imagination, and the story includes a computer as well- that may or may not have a screw loose! This little gem hails from 1958, and Barks' art in it is energetic and entertaining. ■

Pat Calhoun is the associate editor for CBM.



Mickey Mouse *Four Color* #401 (Jun/Jul 1952) Goofy's Mechanical Wizard taps away the answer to a tough question as a perplexed Mickey watches in wonder.

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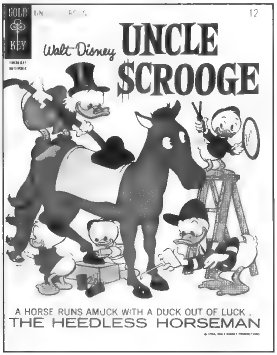

***Uncle Scrooge* #66 (Nov 1966) Duck-bill-hatted Jockey Donald administers to the mechanical horse with an oil can in preparation for the Duckburg Derby.**

PACIFIC COMIC EXCHANGE, INC.

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Scarce
FN 32 (5.0) $1,200

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DC All Star Comics 3
Origin/1st App J.S.A.
FN/VFN 50 (3.5) $25,000

DC All Winners Comics 1
Angel & Black Marvel App
VFN 60 (4.5) $8,000

MVL Amazing Fantasy 15
Origin/1st App Spider-Man
VFN+ 65 (4.5) $15,000

FWCT America's Greatest
Mile High
NM+ 85 (2.0) $8,000

DC Batman 1
Slight Restored by S.Ciccone
S aVFN 80 (3.5) $35,000

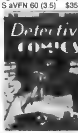
DC Batman 4
5th App Joker
VFN+ 65 (3.3) $9,000

DC Batman 23
Joker-C/Story

TIM Captain America 1
Origin / 1st App Capt America
25 (5.0) $10,000

TIM Captain America 3
Murphy Anderson
FN+ 45 (5.5) $5,500

DC Detective Comics 1
(Scarce) / Fu-Manchu-C
M aVFN 80 (4.0) $40,000



DC Detective Comics 33
Origin Batman
G/VG 15 (5.0) $4,950

DC Detective Comics 38
Origin/1st App Robin
L aVG/FN 25 (4.5) $6,750

MVL Fantastic Four 1
Origin/1st App Fantastic Four
VFN+ 65 (3.0) $14,500

TIM Human Torch 2 (#1)
(#1) Intro/Origin Toro
VG+ 25 (3.5) $5,500

MVL Incredible Hulk 1
Origin/1st App Hulk
VFN+ 65 (4.0) $6,250

DC More Fun Comics 52
Mod. Restored by S.Ciccone
M aVFN 80 (4.0) $19,500

DC More Fun Comics 53
Origin Spectre Part 2
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DC New Book Of Comics 2
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DC New York World a Fair 1940
Superman,Batman & Robin-C
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FOX Phantom Lady 17
Ovst Copy/Classic Bondage-C
VFN+ 65 (3.5) $5,750

DC Sensation Comics 2
Etta Candy Begins
VF/NM 70 (3.5) $5,500

DC Showcase 4
Origin/1st App SA Flash
NM 80 (4.0) $40,000

DC Showcase 14
Mohawk Valley/4th App SA Flash
VFN 60 (5.5) $4,250

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Mod. Restored By W. Sarill
M aFN+ 45 (5.5) $19,000

DC Superman 3
2nd Story-R From Action 5
VFN 55 (5.0) $6,000

DC Superman 11
VF/NM 70 (3.5) $3,000

TIM Young Allies Comics 1
Origin/1st App Young Allies
VG/FN 30 (4.5) $2,500

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Most hobbyists are familiar with the tragic history of escalating comic book cover prices. Ten cents from the early 1930s to (roughly) 1962; twelve cents from 1962 to 1969-1970; fifteen cents until approximately 1972; twenty cents for a few years after that; 12.5¢ for most of 1975 and 1976; then 25¢, 30¢, 35¢, etc., with each cover price in the latter period (say, 1975-1980) holding for a progressively shorter period of time.

Wait a second. Twelve-point-five cents? In 1975 and 1976? Did I slip a gear? After all, weren't new comics going for a quarter back in those days?

Well, yes...and no. True, 25¢ was the going rate for a single newsstand copy of a standard 32-page comic magazine, but if you didn't mind buying a coverless copy of the same mag (or a similar one)—and you knew where to look—then you could buy two (nearly) new comics, packaged together in what was little more than a glorified bread bag, for a measly twenty-five cents.

Look, kids! Two comics for 25¢!" Wow! To my ten year-old mind, here was a discovery on par with Cortez's first vision of the Pacific Ocean, and this—with a few detours, and hopefully, a point or two made along the way—is its story:

Money Problems

The year was 1974. Because my parents were cheap (meaning simply that, like most good parents, they didn't cave-in to my every whim), I repeatedly found myself at local newsstands and 7-11's faced with an unutterably intractable problem in complex symbolic logic. There, splashed luridly before my eyes, were what seemed like hundreds of different comic magazines, tens of hundreds of them, possibly, all displayed neatly in rows, or stuffed haphazardly into spinner racks, but all nevertheless as beguiling as the fabled temptress of Babylon. Their illicit charms and impossible promises beckoned, though silently, like a telepathic siren's song: The Story You Never Expected to Read!; It Had to Happen!; If You Only Buy One Comic Mag This Month, This is the ONE!

Most geeky comic kids who have since become geeky adult comic book collectors or professionals remember the experience: eyes glazing over, innards a-tremble with unspeakable desire, the mantra "Must...have...them...all..." looping through a feverish brain.

By Michael R. Smith

Seduction of the Innocent? You bet...and I was as willing a dupe as any third-grade Slurpee-sucker in grape-colored Toughskin jeans. But what, exactly, did they mean by "if you can buy only one comic mag?" What was this "if" stuff? You mean you could buy more than one? Try telling that to my Mom, for whom I made every trip to the local 7-11 for bread and milk an extended and thoroughly miserable ordeal by whining and begging for any cheap piece of junk that caught my eye, including comic books. I can vividly remember my Mother—often indulgent, but never the most patient woman in the world—standing behind me at the comic book rack. She'd let slip a pained sigh of resignation (as if to say, "God. Not again."), slip two dimes into my sweaty little palm, and utter the inevitable words: "Pick...one. And make it quick."

It was like asking Hugh Hefner to choose a single Playmate. Unbearable. Torturous. In a word: impossible. In such a state I could have selected Young Romance and not noticed, so befuddled was I by the sheer, unthinking inhu-

The Naked Truth

Judging books without covers... a brief, personal history of stripped-logo and coverless comics...

manity of it all. I mean, couldn't mom have dug a little deeper into her purse and squeezed out two more dimes? Or maybe even a buck? It staggered the mind. Still, I made my choice, and departed a sadder yet financially wiser man for the experience.

Greener Grass

Then we moved, just a couple of miles up the road, but it might as well have been to the dark side of the moon. I changed schools, too, which only compounded the problem of my by now insatiable quest for comics, because the playground of my old school bordered the parking lot of that infamous 7-11· the same 7-11, which, though only a few miles distant, my parents ceased to shop at, because we'd moved that much closer to a Handy Market dairy store.

Never heard of it, right? Well, neither had I. But in the '70s, Handy Markets started to crop up all over Central Pennsylvania as the region's "discount" alternative to the higher-priced merchandise sold at 7-11 stores: same bread and milk for mom, same "Lucky Strikes" for the old man, but no *MAD Magazine*, no junky rack toys, and no Slurpees. Instead, they had something called an "Icee" or "Freezee"

or some such non-nutritive crap. It came in a smaller paper cup with no superhero pictures on it, and tasted like February road slush mixed with red food coloring (in other words, exactly like a Slurpee, which it wasn't. So who wanted it?). Worse yet: no comics!!! And I lived right next door! I was learning young that there was truly no end to the universe's myriad conspiracies. Life sucks, and then you don't get to buy comic books anymore. Great. Just great.

Fortunately, like most philosophic and scientific theories about life and the world in which we live it, mine turned out to be wrong, too. In many ways, the Handy Market people were ten times more devious than the 7-11 owners. Instead of racking comics with other periodicals in some remote corner of the store, Handy Market put 'em right next to the check-out counter, crammed into little wire racks that were bolted to the donut case.

This, to my way of thinking, was as it should be. Cigarettes, donuts and coffee up front for mom and pop, comics for me. And best of all, I could get two comics (the magic number that eluded me at the 7-11) for roughly the price of one! Who cared if they were coverless and sometimes a few months old? My parents may have been cheap, but they knew a bargain when they saw one. And so did I. Occasionally, my Dad (always a softer touch than my mom) was in such a beneficent mood (maybe it was all the smoking and java) that he'd actually drop two quarters into my poke—enough for two packs, a total of four comics! Life was good.

Without coverless comic books, I would never have discovered the Golden Age, Ditko's Spider-Man, the "alternative" DC pantheon, the Marvel Universe, Kirby's Kamandi, and many, many others.

And this was how I accumulated a collection of over 1,000 coverless comic books during 1975 and 1976: a four-color tycoon at the tender age of ten. A few years later, when I bought my first *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*, I discovered that these mutilated treasures were "virtually worthless." For my money, the Guide couldn't have been more wrong. Without coverless comic books, I would never have discovered the Golden Age (*DC 100-Page Super Spectaculars*), Steve Ditko's Spider-Man (Marvel Tales), the whole "alternative" DC pantheon (*Blackhawk, Shazam, Sgt. Rock*, etc.), the Marvel Universe (pick a title), Kirby's Kamandi, and many, many others. No, these books weren't worthless; they were read...and loved.

Unfortunately (but perhaps inevitably), my affection for coverless books gradually diminished in proportion to the changing times. By the late 1970s, I had crossed two significant thresholds: puberty's, and that of a local comic book specialty shop. From then on—for better or worse—the hobby would never again be the same for me.

But I'm getting ahead of the story a little bit, not to mention overshooting the purpose of this article—namely, to comment on a disturbing trend related to coverless comic books which seems to be developing in our hobby. But before we do that, let's first examine the phenomenon which landed those coverless books in my local Handy Market lo those many years ago. It's called "cover stripping," and though still S.O.P. at most newsstands, it's a practice which has largely disappeared from the commerce of comic books. (Advanced collectors are advised to skip the following section, in which we provide a brief description and history of the procedure.)

Stripped!

Most comicon attendees, being young, male, and vigorously hormonal, would probably agree that stripping is a good thing. Long-time Golden and Silver Age collectors, however, know that "stripping" refers not merely to the act of removing clothing from an undulating female body (down, fanboys!), but instead to the practice of removing the top third of a comic book's front cover, thereby yielding a book that, if it survives the remainder of the process at all (details following), would "grade out" as Fair/Poor at best.

But why remove part of a comic's front cover in the first place? Because for decades prior to the advent of specialty shops, comic books were distributed to newsstands, drugstores, convenience marts, soda counters, and the like. Generally, these were small, mom-and-pop operations working within the twin constraints of tight profit margins and high overheads. Any merchandise they didn't sell, they ate—literally, if possible. Comics and magazines, being inedible, were instead returnable. That is, what didn't sell off the rack could be returned to the publisher (or, more likely, to a regional magazine distributor) for credit.

Occasionally, whole copies were to be returned intact. But as this entailed significant freight and handling charges on the part of the shipper, vendors were more commonly asked simply to strip the logo from every unsold copy, and then return the stripped logos only. (My research has shown that this practice seems to have been particularly common for comic books from the period c. 1946 to the early 1970s; an informal and by no means exhaustive survey of Golden and Silver Age dealers in this region (MD, VA, PA) revealed that "stripped logo" books from the 1930s and early '40s are seldom seen and/or offered for sale; a thoroughly researched treatment of "cover stripping" during the period 1935-1976 would be welcomed by the editors.) Of course, newsstand owners and other merchants were then honor-bound to destroy the remaining mutilated books (which, as the fine print in the comics' indicia pointed out, were never to be sold with any portion of their covers removed, nor with their covers defaced or mutilated in any way). In other words, it was (and still is) illegal for a retail magazine/news vendor to display and sell a stripped comic book or magazine for which it has already received proper credit from the distributor (that is, a magazine which in a sense has already been "returned" as unsellable).

That this was often not the case—i.e., that books were often completely denuded of their covers, or left as is (but undestroyed), and then sold for 2¢ or a nickel each by unscrupulous opportunists—is the stuff of some of fandom's earliest legends. Stories about boxes of old comics, including coverless and stripped logo books, turning up in used record stores, second-hand bookshops, back-room porno outfits, headshops and

the like are only slightly less common in this hobby than the standard "gosh, we had all those comics when we were kids, but my mom/aunt/grandma threw them out" yarn familiar to ever dealer from Tucson to Topolobampo, and all points in-between. Eventually, stripped logo books, in the form of coverless comics, would even (illegally?) wind up in Central PA's Handy Markets, and from there into my then burgeoning little stash.

The Coverless Conundrum

Perhaps we need a clarification at this point. From what evidence, exactly, do I conclude that the coverless books offered through the Handy Market chain were in fact "doubly stripped" stripped logo books which were supposed to have been destroyed by the original point-of-sale vendor? Easy enough. In the absence of hard empirical evidence (Handy Markets have been defunct now for over ten years), I examined my collection of coverless comic books, and found that it is light on "blue chip" late '60s/early '70s titles (like *Batman* and *Amazing Spider-Man*), and disproportionately heavy on "odd-ball" books from the same period (like *Our Army at War*, various DC Giants, reprint books like *Marvel Tales* and *Marvel's Greatest Comics*, etc.).

Though I have no sales data to support this claim, it seems reasonable to me to assume that titles like *Batman* and *Amazing Spider-Man* sold relatively well during the 1970s. Hence, fewer of these books would have been stripped for returns. Reprint titles, war books, and other "off-brand" products, however, may not have sold so well, and thus could conceivably have been stripped and returned (or repackaged/resold) in larger quantities. One possible (and, I think, probable) scenario is that the "Handy Market" books (how's that for a new pedigree name?) were stripped for returns once their "shelf life" expired, and were sold sometime shortly thereafter in bulk to an independent repackager, who stripped the covers completely and then bagged and resold the books at a cut-rate to the Handy Market chain (and possibly to similar chains throughout the country; any thoughts, readers?) Finally, the fact that I have a handful of "complete" stripped logo books (i.e., with two-thirds of their front covers still attached), all acquired through those infamous coverless "two-packs" nearly 20 years ago, would seem to confirm my assumption that these books were indeed the illicit booty of "looted" newsstand backrooms and wastepaper heaps throughout the Susquehanna Valley.

Sellers were honor-bound to destroy remaindered mutilated books... they were never to be sold with any portion of their covers removed, nor with their covers defaced or mutilated in any way.

Judging Books Without Covers

Whether this practice of repackaging and reselling comic books to a secondary vendor was legal or not (I suspect it wasn't) is best left to a future article. Right now, I'm more concerned with our hobby's attitude toward coverless and incomplete comic books in general. Reading through a recent issue of *Comics Buyer's Guide*, I was surprised to see an ad for coverless Golden Age books, some listing for as much as one-half of Overstreet's "Good" price. Half of "Good?" For a coverless comic book? Is it possible, given the increasing scarcity of unrestored Golden Age books in any grade, that coverless copies of any given book are now worth as much as "Fair" copies (with most or all of their covers) of the same title? Remarkable. Also remarkable, and increasingly common, are ads for dealers buying coverless comic books. A few years ago, the hobby would have institutionalized these guys, but now, maybe they're not so crazy, as both amateur and professional "restorationists" scamper for a panel here, a corner there, all in the name of making a few more bucks on a book by "upgrading" it with parts picked from the guts of a "worthless" coverless copy.

And perhaps that's what troubles me the most. Not that dealers are buying and selling coverless comic books with greater frequency and at higher prices than ever before, but my impression (and I admit that that's all it is, really) that these books are not being bought by collectors who simply want to have, say, an *Action Comics* #19, cover or no, but instead by those who look to profit from them as four-color junkyards good only for upgrading "better" copies (which can then be sold for big ger bucks), and nothing more. Buy 'em, cannibalize 'em, and chuck 'em. So what? I mean, who cares about the poor sap who might actual ly want to read and own the book just because it's inherently cool "as is?" They're only junk, right?

I say, "wrong," but I don't really expect anyone to listen. I would advise collectors like myself (e.g., broke most of the time), though, to ponder this: People with more money than you are right now paying big bucks for comic books restored with the guts of coverless comics you used to be able to buy cheap, but which you won't be able to buy at all once they've been wrapped in the cover from a low grade copy of the same book, or (worse) sliced, diced, and chopped into julienne fries, assim lated into the innards of, for example, a "G-, centerfold missing" copy of *Captain America Comics* #20 (centerfold replaced, now VG+), and then discarded as "virtually worthless." In other words, the days of buying coverless books as a "quick fix" for the "real thing" which you can't afford in grade are rapidly becoming a thing of the past.

Like Handy Markets. Like Slurpees in superhero cups. Like two comics for a quarter. Like being ten years-old.

Oh, well. All good things come to an end, and there's nothing really sad about that. Truth is never sad; troubling, maybe, but not sad. What's sad is when good things end long before they should, and for all the wrong reasons. ■

Michael Smith is a relatively penniless Golden and Silver Age comic book collector (low-grade and coverless books a specialty), infrequent writer, part-time theologian and beer drinker, full time cynic, and happy employee of the Johns Hopkins University Press.

In Demand: Pre-Golden Age & Esoteric!

Welcome to the opening season of the spring conventions. I know we all look forward to what the next few months hold in store for us and wait anxiously to see what previously "unknown" books will emerge as which markets will capture collector attention.

Always a great pastime, sitting down with the Gerber Journals and pen and paper in hand, and browsing over those books we just might have missed before. Plenty of lists have been made over the winter and now the hunt begins. From what I've been hearing, collectors are asking for such a diverse spectrum of various books, so we can only hope that the dealers are able to respond. Be it esoteric 50s romance or pre-code crime, late 40s good girl or pre Golden Age key books, these far flung demands should prove to offer us one of the most exciting selections of books this coming convention season.

Golden Age

Really, what don't collectors want? Pre GA books offer the excitement of rarity, as well as those 1939 - 1941 books from Fiction House, Hillman, Fox, and Centaur. World War II covers remain in demand, as well as high grade Timely. DC keys have experienced a surge of interest, but the real interest is the esoteric "scarce" and key books from the non-mainstream publishers. Collectors recognize that most of these books were either not printed in great quantity, or were not widely distributed beyond the North East section of the country... Collectors are showing a patience that hasn't been present since 1993, and waiting for that particular book in "their" particular grade. By no means are they paying any less that the market highs, but they are looking to find that "just right" book.

Sales: Adventure #42 FN 'R' $1,250; Red Raven #1 GD $2,500; Bill Barnes #1 FN/VF $600; Clue Comics #7 VF+ $325; Human Torch #16 FN+ $510; Superman #30 VF 'R' $800; Captain America #23 NM- $2,200; Wing's Comics #2 FN $450; USA #1 VG- $2,100; Silver Streak #3 VF 'R' $1,400; Sparkler #1 VG+ $700; Heroic #10 VF/NM $260; Hyper Mystery Comics #1 VF $1,400.

1946-1953

Although the frequency of multiples being achieved in the GA has lessened, it really has only migrated into the post Golden Age books. Here we can easily find quite a few books that regularly sell for many multiples of guide, and that still brings their price in under $400 - a financial range that many more collectors are comfortable in. Scarcity is the hurdle that must be overcome, since quite a few of these books were distributed on a wholly different basis than the mainstream publishers. Matt Baker's work leads the way in the Fox titles, and pre-code horror is making a very strong bid as well to take the lead from the Good Girl genre.

Sales: Negro Romances #1 VF $985; Lorna, Jungle Girl #2 NM- $165; Real Fact #5 FN $560; Bold Stories (#1) VF $1,580; Voodoo Annual #1 FN $210; Western Frontier #1 VF $135; Skeleton Hand #2 FN $110; Indians #1 VF $250; Jungle #100 FN $110; Kaanga #1 VF $310; Magic #123 VF $85; US Marines in Action #1 FN $65; Venus #10 VF $390; Super Duper Comics #3 VF $115; Strange #1 FN $95.

Silver Age

The word is that some very exciting things are happening in this market. A few have predicted the return of the Silver Age and are prepared for renewed collector interest. High grade keys are bringing multiples of Guide, although that never really stopped, it just lost its

continued on page 65

MARKET REPORTS

TIM COLLINS • BTS UNLIMITED, INC.

GOLDEN • COLORADO

This past off-season for store retail sales has been especially harsh. In the past sixty days some eight stores have closed in Colorado. The Denver area, in particular, had an excessive number of stores, and in my opinion, it still does. I should note that two of the stores closed as a result of failure to pay their reported sales taxes! The authorities promptly auctioned off the inventory of the store (fixtures and all). Word to the wise: never ever neglect to pay Uncle Sam! Brighter notes: the interest in Golden and Silver Age comics is going strong. A big surprise from my last catalogue was the sale of low and mid grade Marvel bronze age books. Issues of the Incredible Hulk below 200, Iron Man below #150, Daredevil below #175, and Amazing Spider-Man below #250 sold particularly well. Granted that the books are cheap (I sold them at a flat $1.00 each), it is still gratifying to know that there are large numbers of collectors looking to complete their collections for the shear joy of READING! As stated above, Silver and Golden Age books are selling quite well. Interest in horror and science fiction titles is very strong. Also, the frenzy over Schomburg Xela covers continues in all grades. I bought a number of them from a deal-

(Continued on page 67)

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GREG PHARIS & DAVE GRISEZ

San Diego Comics & Collectibles

We have to start out this month by saying a great big Happy Birthday to Carl Barks...95 years young and like the Energizer Bunny...still goin'. Our condolences to the families of Jerry Siegel, Burne Hogarth, and Bernard Baily... just a reminder to all of you fans out there... the next time you attend a convention, don't forget to stop by and tell your favorite Golden Age artist how much you have enjoyed their work! Let's all appreciate them while they're still here! Also, if you should have any cards or letters for Gene Colan send them in and CBM will forward them for you. Well... on to the marketreport.

Comicbook sales: (Non-consignment) Detective #292 GD $22; Amazing Spider-Man #121 & #122 VF+ $180 for the pair; Journey into Mystery #89 VF+ at 1.25 Guide; Fantastic Four #29 & #32 GD $50 for the pair. (consignment) Kaanga #1 VF+ $305; Exciting #64 VF+ $175; JoJo #21 VG $45; Amazing Spider-Man #1 GD $1050.

Toys: The 6 Million Dollar Man seems to be heating up as of late... a Mission to Mars (MIC) sold for $35 and we recently acquired a Bigfoot and Oscar. Original Star Wars figures have turned on the afterburners recently... loose figures (complete with all weapons) are now running between $12-$15 each (a significant increase over the last year). A Hans Solo Carbonite and Luke SkyWalker Storm Trooper left the store at warp-speed for the tidy sum of $200. In addition a Batgirl glass sold for $25 and a Cyborg action figure from Brazil sold for $85.

That's it for now... next time you hit town don't forget to drop in and say hello!

JOHN CHROSCINSKI & BRUCE ELLSWORTH • TROPIC COMICS

PLANTATION, FLORIDA

Hello from South Florida. Tropic just had our first show with special guest Joe Jusko and it was fantastic! Joe and his girlfriend Megan were a lot of fun and very gracious to all of the fans that showed up. We are still selling tons of Superman items. We also just received a huge load of Fawcetts... mostly Captain Marvel Jr. and Bulletman. Also a load of Quality comics. No really big sales this month mostly Silver Age Marvels and DC's in lower (affordable) grades. I gotta take a minute and tip my hat to Matt Nelson and his outstanding article in issue #32 of CBM... I'm glad I didn't receive his phone bill for all the research that went into the Pedigree article! Till next time...seeya

GREG WHITE • COMIC BOOKS & COLLECTIBLES • KISSIMMEE • FLORIDA

Hello again from Central Florida. Post Christmas sales have been okay, but not great. Money seems to be a bit tight. Hopefully springtime will bring more tourists to the area and help expand our sales base.

Silver Age (1955-1969) The story here remains the same. High grade keys move while most other books remain stagnant. Store, convention, and mail order activity clearly indicates a sluggish market on Silver Age comics that do not fall into the "high grade" or "key" category. I constantly run across collectors and so called "investors" who show interest in a nice solid book but expect to purchase it at wholesale. What the hell do they think I paid for the book?! It is sad when the blow-out mentality that pervades the new product market is confused with vintage material. Give me a break!

Recent sales: Brave & Bold #47 NM $50; Batman #171 FN $175; Amazing Spider-Man 14 VG $225; X-Men #1 GD $450; Showcase #14 FN $750, Sarge Steel #1-10 NM set $95

Golden Age (1935-1955) We were fortunate to be able to purchase a nice group of Timely comics this past week. I had to pay a high percentage of Guide however, but good to have the books! Sales are steady if the books are reasonably priced. I wish more "keys" would pop in through the door. It seems that non-key Golden Age need to be priced a bit below Guide in order to make a sale here.

Recent sales: More Fun #76 GD $175; All American #28 FN $400; Batman #28 GD $100; Archie #7 VG $75; Whiz #6 VG $250

Original Art & Toys An active area this month! We purchased a group of 1960's boxed model kits and a fine run of 1950's TV Guides. Our Disney animation art continues to sell well. Replacing the product is the problem... it just doesn't come in that often.

Recent sales: Mickey Mouse animation drawing from 1947 $95; King Kong Aurora kit boxed $450; GI Joe doll with foot locker $75; Flintstones Hanna-Barbera cartoon cel $60.

That concludes our month. Glad you took the time to read our Marketplace Report. Have a great Spring and come say hello when you visit Florida!

DAN GREENHALGH

SHOWCASE NEW ENGLAND

Wallingford, Connecticut

It is the middle of February. We have had more snow than I can ever remember here in the North East and we are just a couple of weeks away from the start of a new comic book season

Congratulations are in order to More Fun Comics and it's owner Bill Ponsetti. Recently he was able to purchase a wonderful batch of early Golden Age comics that included Action #1-10. I was fortunate that Bill gave me the opportunity to purchase many of them (we did). I would like to publicly thank him (Thank you Bill!)

December through February are typically slow months at the high end of the market. They were much stronger for us this year, however, than in past years. We continue to have record sales and achieved record prices on many books. Most of the books getting record prices were Silver Age

Golden Age sales: Action #19 FN (MR) $1,500, #23 FN $1,500, Adventure Comics #41 VG $1,000, #44 VG/FN $1,500, #47 VG+ $1,000, #51 VG+ $1,000, #61 GD/VG $3500, #48 VG+ (MR) $2300, #72 FN $3500, Air Fighters Vol 1 #2 NM (PA Copy) $4,000,

All American #16 FN (MR) $16,000, #17 VG $1,800, #19 FN (MR) $3,500,#61 VF+ $4,500; All Select #1 VF $7,500; All Star #3 FN+ (MR) $5,500, FN (MR) $5,000, #4 VG+ $1,500, #5 VF+ $3,150, #6 VF+ $1900, #7 VF+ $2,100, #8 VF/NM (LR) $8,000, VG/VG+ $3,800, VG $2,200, #9 FN+ $1,050, #10 FN+ $1100, #11 FN/VF $1,100, #12 VF/NM $1,600, #52 VF+ $1200; All Winners #2 VF+ $4,750, FN- $1,400, #3 VF/NM $2600,

Amazing Man #5 FN+ (MR) $4,000; America's Best #4 (Mile High) $1,000, Arrow #1 FN/VF $1500; Batman #1 VF $30,000, FN (MR) $10,500, #3 VF+ $5,000, #5 VF+ $4,200, #9 VF/NM $4,000, #11 FN+ $2,200, VF+ $3,500, #14 FN/VF $1,400, #17 VF/NM $2,000, #18 VF/NM $1,100, #19 VF/NM $1,100, #20 VF/NM $2,000, #22 VF/NM $1,100, #23 VF+ $2,600, #25 VF+ $2,200, #27 VF/NM $1,500, #42 VF/NM $1,300. Big All American #1 FN+ $3,500; Captain America #1 FN (MR) $12,000, VG/FN (MR) $10,500, #45 VF+ $1,100, #61 VF+ $1,500; Detective #1 FN+ (LR) $55,000, #18 FN+ (LR) $1,500, #19 FN+ (LR) $1,300, #29 VG/FN (ER) $4,800, FN+ (MR) $8,000, #31 VG/FN $9,000, #35 GD $1,800, #38 FN/VF $12,000, FN/VF (cleaned) $9,500, FN (MR) $7,500, #40 FN (MR) $1,000, #42 FN+ $1,000, publicity to the GA records. Keep an eye out for the DC War Books. They are really heating up and reports are that they are difficult to locate, let alone in grade. There are definitely Silver books that are difficult to locate in high grade, and those books are fueling the demand for the rest of the market. Just like so many GA collectors are doing right now, SA collectors are looking at the long term and realizing that the next run-up in price is going to put many of these great books out of reach.

CORRECTION: In a recent issue of CBM I reported that the White Mountain copy of Amazing Fantasy #15 sold in the high forty thousands. I have since learned that the original deal fell through... and a new buyer has recently purchased the book at an "discounted" bargain price. As of this writing, the new sale price has been confirmed at just over $31,000

Sales: JLA #55 VF+ $50; Tales Of Suspense #52 FN++ $70; Flash #123 NM $1,200; Superman #199 VF+ $150; Our Army At War #91 FN $145, Fantastic Four #5 FN- $625; Fantastic Four #48 NM $1,250; Amazing Fantasy #15 FN $4,800; Avengers #57 VF+ $55; Adventure #269 FN+ $89, #256 VF- $325; Showcase #22 GD $370; Silver Surfer #1 NM $550; Brave & Bold #28 G $350; GI Combat #108 VF $38; Star Trek #1 FN- $150; X-Men #2 $425.

1970s:

"FUN". That is the word I keep hearing over and over again when it comes to 70s collectors. Certainly there are those books that are difficult to locate and that provides a challenge, but also the fact that a handful of key NM books can be had for under a hundred dollars. The hunt for the DC War Books has spilled over into the 70s, as well as the Marvel horror reprints by Kirby. Keep a very close eye out for those 100 PAGE issues in high grade, especially the Romance titles. Collectors are now hot on the trail for Poison Ivy, Mr. Freeze, and Bat Girl appearances that are scattered about in the various DC titles besides Detective and Batman. Wonder Woman issues from the original series seem to be wholly undervalued according collectors and they are trying to salvage many of these issues from the bargain bins.

Sales: Wonder Woman #200 VF/NM $15; Wonder Woman #329 NM $10; Weird War Tales #1 VF+ $45; JLA #74 VF/NM $18, #78 NM $20; Superfriends #1 NM $15; Outlaw Kid #1 NM $12; Avengers #71 VG/NM $32; Tarzan #207 NM $15; Brave & Bold #93 VF $22; Chamber Of Darkness #7 VF/NM $18; Unknown Soldier #205 NM $20; Werewolf By Night #32 NM $95; Supergirl #1 VF/NM $14; Amazing Spiderman #124 NM $40, #101 FN $75; Adventure #431 NM $25; Hulk #181 NM $385; Champions #1 NM $22; Daredevil #158 NM $65; Marvel Team-Up #1 NM $100; Sgt. Rock #302 NM $32.

Fallout Consensus

With the fallout from the new comics market, collectors have been asking themselves what this holds in store for us. After polling mail order dealers, retail shops, and collectors, the consensus seems to be that the affects won't really be assessed for some time.

In the short run, sellers haven't noticed any slowdown in Gold to the 70s, but with the lack of new "converts" to the merits of these books, we might go wanting for new infusion in the years to come. We must continue to ask ourselves how we can each continue to keep the market a healthy, fun place to be, and how can we continue to bring in new collectors. Rumor has it that convention organizers are going to market their upcoming conventions in a wholly different manner, and really try to bring in the general public and create a new interest in comics. We will all certainly look forward to seeing that. ■

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MARVIN ROSENBERG & SCOTT WHALEY

Great Neck, New York

The Golden and Silver Age markets over the past few months are best described as steady and calm. The Golden Age frenzy of 1995 is finally subsiding as collectors attempt to catch their breaths after a year of "What's hot this month" speculation. Demand is still very strong for Golden Age but the perceived bargains are clearly disappearing. Many collectors are now beginning to look at 1950's material. They just seem to be waiting for the masses to realize how undervalued most of this stuff is! Perhaps this will be where the next frenzy occurs.

Silver Age has performed surprisingly well over the last few months. As always NM books sell quickly at over Guide prices. However, high priced books in below VF/NM condition are becoming difficult to sell at at Guide prices. We are discounting almost all our books below VF by 25% to Guide.

It is important for collectors as well as investors to know that the slowdown in liquidity can be compensated for by by reducing the cost of the merchandise. Books have proven to be more liquid when offered at a discount. Many collectors are taking advantage of this opportunity to fill gaps in their collections at below Guide prices.

We have also heard that many new collectors have recently been buying "overgraded" books at what they thought was a substantially better price. They are now realizing that a VF discounted to Guide is a better deal than an overgraded VF+ at Guide.

Some recent sales: Fantastic Four #12 NM,#14 NM+, #15 NM, #18 NM/M, #48 NM+, X Men #2 VF, #4 NM, #6 VF+, #20 VF+, #54 VF+, #66 NM, Amazing Spider Man Annual #1 NM, #2 NM, #3 NM+, Amazing Spider Man #1 VF+, #12 NM, #13 VF/NM, #14 VF++,,#16 VF/NM, #22 NM, #26 NM, #29 NM, #41 NM, #44 NM-, #49 NM, Tales of Suspense #39 VF/NM, #42 NM-, #57 VF++, #59 VF++, Avengers #1 VF++, #2 NM, #3 VF/NM, Daredevil Annual #1 NM, Journey Into Mystery #98 NM, #99 NM_, #105 NM- Batman #4 VF-, Superman #12 FN, #14 VG, #16 FN+ and so on and so on.

WILL FONG • COLLECTIBLES PLUS • SAN FRANCISCO • CALIFORNIA

Hi from the Golden City! We are a full-time dealer specializing in Golden Age comicbooks. We can only be seen at conventions, via mail order, and by pre-arranged appointments. Enough about us. Let's get right into the report.

First, Golden Age is hot, hot, hot!! Especially key's, Timely's, Chesslers and Pre-Code Horror. Anything old and vintage from the 1930-1950 era sell easily. It's hard to find good material especially for resale. We're currently paying 4X Guide for some special key's especially Captain America #74.

Sales: Detective comics #80 FN+ $320; Batman #171 FN+ $150; Superman #2 VG- $1,800; Captain America #12 VG+ $600, #74 PR $250; Witches Tales #25 VG+ $80; Mad #9,12,14,22 all VG-/VG+ for $300 (cheap).

Recent acquisitions: With the help of the Comic Weasel (you know who you are) Suspense Comics #9 FN-; More Fun #7 VG-, #100 FN+; Punch Comics #10 FN+; Marvel Mystery Annual #1 FR; Detective Comics #33 (coverless) FR and a Mac Raboy page from Flash Gordon—1960's vintage.

I want this report to show collectors that we are seriously into the Golden Age. Enjoy life and collect to read and the $$$$ is an added bonus as a long term investment. Enough babbling. Go hunt down those key Comic Freaks, aka Comic Weasel (cryptic reference). Look out for our upcoming ad in this publication. I'm out! Later!

DAN GREENHALGH CONT. FROM PAGE 65

#43 FN+ $1,000, #49 VF $1,200, #58 VF $1,500, #61 VF/NM $2750, #71 VF/NM $2,000, #82 VF/NM $1,750, #85 VF/NM $2,200, #114 VF/NM $2,200, #118 VF/NM $1000, #128 VF/NM $1,000, #140 VG+ $1,500, NM $10,000; Fight #1 VF/NM $5,000; Flash #1 VG $14,000; Green Lantern #1 VF- $16,000, VG/VG+ $4,000;

Jumbo #1 FR $1,000, #2 GD $2,000, #3 GD $1,500, #4 GD $1,500, #5 GD $1,500, #6 GD $1,500; Marvel #1 $40,000, #2 VG/FN (ER) $4,000, #5 FN/VF (LR) $7,500, #10 VG $1,000; More Fun #55 VG+ $5,500, #60 FN $1,200, #63 FN+ (LR) $1,000, #71 FN/FN+ $2,200; New York World's Fair 1939 VG/VG+ $5,000, GD/VG $3,000; Plastic Man (Game of Death) FN/VF $1650; Prize #13 NM (Mile High) $1,400; Red Raven #1 VG (MR) $1,800; Sensation #1 VF $10,000, FN+ $6,000, VG/FN (MR) $2,800; Silver Streak #1 VF+ (Mile High) $20,000; Superman #1 FN+ (MR) $22,000, #5 FN+ $1,350; Suspense #2 VF $1,000; Sub-Mariner #1 VG $3,700; Tales of Terror Annual #2 VF/NM $2,400; Tough Kid Squad #1 VF+ $7,500; Wonder Comics #1 VG (ER) $1,800; Wonder Woman #1 FN/VF $7,000, FN+ $5,500, FN- $3,500; World's Best #1 VF $9,000, VG $2,500; World's Finest #3 VF/NM $2,500, #4 VF/NM $1,700, #7 VF/NM $1,150, #8 through #15, #17 VF/NM $1,000

Silver Age Sales: Action #252 VF+ $1,800; Amazing Fantasy #15 NM- $30,000, FN $4,400, FN/FN+ $5,000, VF (MR) $2,500 (two copies), FN/FN+ $5250, FN+ $6,500, FN+ $6,000, FN+ $5,500, VG+ $2500, FN- $4,000. Amazing Spider-Man #1 FN/VF $5,200, FN $3,000, FN $3,000, VG $1,600, VG- $1,300, #2 NM+ $6,250. VF/NM $3,500, VF+ $2,800, VF $2,000, VF- $1,700, #3 NM/MT $3,500, #3 NM $2,800, VF+ $1,700, VF $1,000, #4 NM/MT $3,000, #4 NM+ $2,500. NM $2,000, #5 NM+ $2,500, NM $2,200, #6 NM $2,200, VF $1,000 (two copies), #7 NM+ $1,400, #8 NM $1,350, #9 NM $1,500. #10 NM $1,300, #11 NM- $1,000, #13 NM $1,100, #14 NM/MT $2,500, NM- $1,500, VF+ $1,000, #15 NM+ $1,000, #16 NM+ $1,000. #17 NM/MT $1,000, #28 NM/MT $1,100; Avengers #4 NM- $1,600; Batman #100 VF+ $2,000; Brave and Bold #28 FN/VF $1,800; Daredevil #1 NM $2,000 (four copies), NM- $1,800, VF+ $1,200; Detective #168 VF $2,000; Fantastic Four #1 NM (2nd best known copy???) $27,000, VF+ $10,800, VF $8,250, VG (MR) $1,500. #2 MT $7,000, NM $5800, VF $2,000, #3 VF+ $1,700, #4 VF+ $1,850, VF $1,000, #5 NM $4,800, VF $2,000, VF- $1,500, #6 VF/NM $1,000, #48 NM/MT $1,500 (two copies), NM+ $1,200; Green Lantern #1 VF $2,500; Hulk #1 VF/NM $14,000, #3 VF+ $1,350; Journey into Mystery #83 FN/VF $1,800; Justice League of America #1 FN/VF $1,500; Showcase #4 VF+ $28,000. VG $2,800, FN (MR) $2,800, #8 VG $1,600, #9 VG/FN $1,500, VG+ $1,400, #17 NM- $5,000; Strange Tales #110 NM $2,000; Tales of Suspense #39 VF+ $3,000, FN/VF $1,700, FN $1,000; Tales to Astonish #35 VF/NM $2,100; X-Men #1 NM $10,500, VF/NM $6,000, VF+ $5,000, VF/VF+ $3,800, VF $3,000 (two copies), FN+ $1,700, FN- $1,000.

In 1996 I expect the market for Gold and Silver to be steady and stable for us. Sales this year will be off a little from last year, but, that is because last year was an especially "hot" market. Golden Age books are likely to be overshadowed once again by their Silver Age counterparts. Golden Age continues to sell well except at the high end where it has slowed down a little (books in excess of $10,000). Collectors are looking to pay near Guide prices for non key books in low to mid grade, especially in lieu of the increase in Guide prices in the fall Golden Age Update and those expected to come in the annual due out in April.

The increase in guide prices seem to be having an impact on the market. I have noticed many dealers are paying slightly less for books as a percentage of guide than last year. Many collectors, not yet used to the change in buying percentages, are holding out for higher prices. Consequently, some dealers are having difficulty replenishing their supplies.

The state of the Golden Age market is not unlike that of other years. Seasoned collectors just weather unsettled times like these and seem able to selectively take advantage of the opportunities that are presented to them. There is a good supply of Golden Age books in the marketplace at the moment. As in similar circumstances in past years, however, I expect that it will eventually dry up. It may be a few years before the hobby sees this kind of supply again

TIM COLLINS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 62

er at 1.5X guide and have no trouble selling them at 2X guide. Some of these sales were even to other dealers! The other interesting trend I've noticed of late comes from my high end customers. The acceptance of restored books at guide or above Guide is becoming commonplace. To wit, I sold a Planet #1, VF lightly restored with color touch-up for $6,500. What does this mean for unrestored books? They will command a huge premium. You can hardly open a top dealer's catalogue without tripping over restored books. One last notable sale: Daring Mystery Comics #1, VF $10,000.

Tim's tip of the month: I've noticed that the friction between a comic book and a backing board sometimes causes color to rub off. This seems particularly true of certain colors such as red and yellow. My solution: bag your comic with a thin Mylar bag, tape the bag shut, place on top of truly acid free board and then slide into thicker Mylar bag. This also has the benefit of allowing you to remove said comic and backing board, remove boards easily to show back cover without getting any fingerprints on your comic! Till next time - collect and read what you enjoy!

—End Market Reports ■

Collectors should note that the opinions expressed in CBM Market Reports are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Comic book values and prices listed here are subject to the above conditions. Seasoned bobbiests are acutely aware that comic book and collectible prices and values vary based on geographic location, time of year, and a number of other marketplace factors.

Continued from page 13

Relative Value & Scarcity

Could the CBM enlighten readers on how Gerber came up with the ratings on their relative value (RVI) and scarcity (SI) indexes in the Photo Journal Guide to Comics? I have found the SI to be suspect on a number of occasions. For example, Captain Marvel #51 is given an SI of "6", making it an "uncommon" book. 50-200 copies in existence. Yet, I have seen this book at either a store, show or in a catalog seven times in the last month! The book (Little Lana #9) is another case in point. This is one of the "missing cover" books in the Photo Journal. Of the nine books in the Lana series, until last month when I found a copy of Lana #2, it was the only one I'd been able to find over a four-year search! The book I should not have been able to find. I found, and the ones I should be able to find, I have not found! Is the Photo Journal in need of an update?

Jim Campos, California

I think we all have a lot to learn about the actual rarity of certain books. I've sometimes suggested to my local collector friends that, in fact, we may never fully understand or appreciate the rarity/scarcity of the very books in our own collection because... heck... if we found it, it just couldn't be rare, could it? At least that's what many collectors erroneously think of our own material. I fondly refer to this as the "Eureka" syndrome and have found it to be true more often than one might think.

Anderson Spotlight

I received Comic Book Marketplace #32 in the mail and I was overjoyed to see the spotlight on one of the finest artists around: Murphy Anderson. I was a young kid of 14 in 1970, living in New York, when I went to the NY Comic Con, July 4th weekend. A bunch of kids were standing around this tall, distinguished looking gentleman who was drawing sketches. As one of the kids was leaving, I asked him who the big guy was and he replied that it was Murphy Anderson. I thought Murphy was one of the greatest artists ever, so I patiently waited in line to get a sketch by him.

As I finally made it to the front of the line, he told me that he had to leave, (instantaneous heart failure!), but he told me to come to the DC offices the next day and that he would do a sketch for me at that time (instantaneous ecstasy!).

I woke up extra early the next morning to get ready and walk the few miles to the DC offices so that I could be there at 9:00 a.m. sharp! I was brought to the area where he was busy at a drawing board inking over Curt Swan's pencils on the latest Superman. He was very nice to me, showing me around the offices and showing me pages of Jack Kirby's work with the Newsboy Legion in an upcoming issue of Jimmy Olsen.

Afterwards, he took me back to his drawing board where he asked me who I would like on my sketch. I was always a big fan of Adam Strange (he said he was one of his favorites too!), so he drew a profile shot of him, gave me the sketch, shook my hand, and I sort of floated out of there and all the way home!

Memories of a great man and a great day that I'll never forget! Sincerely.

Eric G. Blackmore, Tennessee

(Continued on page 71)

Always Buying!
Your vintage collectibles

Golden and Silver Age comic books and comic art
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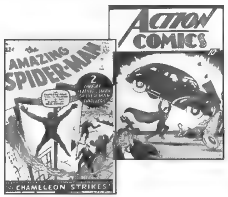
Rock & Roll memorabilia
Vintage movie posters
Autographs - celebrity and historical



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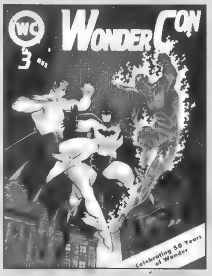
Will Eisner, Gil Kane, Julius Schwartz, Russ Heath, & Sheldon Moldoff to help WonderCon '96 Celebrate a Decade of Wonder!

Golden and Silver Age fans...start your engines! WonderCon, Northern California's largest comic book convention, revs up for its 10th anniversary celebration April 26-28, 1996 at the Oakland Convention Center in Oakland, California.

"We have always approached WonderCon with a real need to satisfy all comic book fans, "said Joe Field, owner of Flying Colors Comics & Other Cool Stuff in Concord, California and WonderCon's Advertising and Promotion Director. "The WonderCon board of directors are all long-time comic book fans and the richness of the history of the comic's medium fascinates us, so we try to incorporate some historical elements into each of our conventions." Besides Field, the WonderCon board includes Convention Chair Mike Friedrich, the owner of Star*Reach, one of the comic industry's foremost talent agencies (and a former writer for Marvel and DC during the late 60's and early 70's); Director of Guests and Programming Bryan Uhlenbrock, a freelance writer and former comics' distribution manager; and Convention Administrator Alex Amado, a freelance writer with retailing experience at Comic Relief in Berkeley, California.

"Every year we learn a bit more about what comic fans want out of our convention," said Field, "and last year (1995) was definitely no exception. We heard a ton of positive comments about the quality and rarity of the Golden Age and Silver Age books at the con and the general enthusiasm so many of the fans in attendance share for the old stuff. I expect another active WonderCon for buyers and sellers of Golden and Silver Age comics. This is the best opportunity for fans who can make it to Northern



California to really put a finger on the pulse of the comic book marketplace."

In 1996, WonderCon welcomes back comic book pioneer and legend Will Eisner, creator of the Spirit, Sheena Queen of the Jungle and Blackhawk, proprietor of the Eisner-Iger Studio in the Golden Age, trailblazer of the graphic novel format in the 1970's (A Contract with God, A Life Force) and still a vital creative voice in the mid-90's (Dropsie Avenue, To The Heart Of The Storm).

"1996 is Will Eisner's 60th anniversary in comics, so we're delighted he can share his comics' anniversary with us," Field said. "Anyone with a true interest in the Golden Age reveres Mr. Eisner for his many accomplishments. His unique perspective on the history of comics is worth the price of admission alone." Among the more than 100 professional guests due at WonderCon this year are other stellar veterans of the comics' scene, including:

Gil Kane, whose career started in the Golden Age when he assisted Simon and Kirby on strips such as Sandman and Newsboy Legion, as well as freelancing for MLJ and working in the art shops of Jack Binder and Bernard Baily. Besides doing the art chores on a plethora of western titles (Johnny Thunder, Hopalong Cassidy, etc.) Kane is perhaps best known for his Silver Age work on DC's Green Lantern series, a Golden Age retread hero who was revamped in 1960 by editor Julius Schwartz. Kane has worked on numerous other projects, including the Amazing Spider-Man, Thunder Agents and Conan.

Julius Schwartz is best known as the editor during DC's hero revivals of the late 1950's and early 1960's. It could be said that it was on Julie's books the Silver Age was born, with new versions of Green Lantern, Hawkman and the Flash. Julie also guided the Superman books in the post- Mort Weisinger era. His career started as a literary agent in the 1930's, helping to blossom the careers of such stellar authors as Ray Bradbury and Robert Bloch.

Russ Heath started his career in the late 1940's and is acknowledged as one of the medium's finest illustrators of the Western and War genres. His work has appeared in such classics as Frontline Combat and Mad, for EC Comics; Kid Colt Outlaw and Two Gun Kid for Marvel; and Our Army at War, Sea Devils and The Brave and the Bold for DC.

Sheldon Moldoff started his career in comics in the late 30's doing "oddity" pages for National Periodical Publications (DC), along with lettering and backgrounds for Bob Kane. In 1939, he left Kane to work on his own feature, Cliff Cornwall. His work soon appeared in Flash Comics doing the Hawkman and Black Pirates in All-American Comics. Shelly also penciled and inked Captain Midnight for Fawcett, as well as working on such other characters as The Black Terror, Moon Girl and Tygra of the Jungle. In 1953, he became Bob Kane's "ghost", penciling and inking over 5000 pages and covers of Batman until 1967.

Along with the impressive list of guests, WonderCon has become known as the "kick-off" point for the summer comic book convention season. Besides the active market at WonderCon for Golden and Silver Age comics, the convention regularly features a full slate of summer movie previews, a Japanese animation festival, and an auction of original art to benefit the Literacy Volunteers of America (past contributors to the auction include Will Eisner, Shelly Moldoff, Mike Kaluta, Murphy Anderson, Gil Kane, Sergio Aragones, and many others). The dates for WonderCon are April 26-28, 1996... at the Oakland Convention Center, 10th and Broadway in Oakland, CA. The official convention hotel is the Oakland Marriott (be sure to ask for your special WonderCon rate when you make your reservations) at (510) 451-4000. Even Southwest Airlines offers discounted airline tickets at (800) 433-5368 (Here's a CBM tip: Mention ID code A9716 to get the WonderCon rate.)

For more complete information, call the WonderCon convention hotline at (510) 464-1120 or check out the WonderCon World Wide Web site at http://www.insv.

The CBM staff will see you there!

Diamond International Galleries Plans Gala Party to Celebrate Carl Barks' 95th Birthday!

Duckburg in Maryland? You bet! That's because on March 27th Diamond International Galleries will mark Carl Barks' 95th birthday with an honorary dinner. Held at the Gallery's headquarters in Timonium, Maryland, guests will literally be surrounded by Barks oil paintings, lithographs, sketches, and statues.

"We want to make this a very special event for Carl Barks, both as a birthday party and as a way to honor him for all the enjoyment he has brought to comics fans," said Diamond President and CEO Steve Geppi.

All of the proceeds raised from ticket sales for Barks' birthday party will be donated to the International Museum of Cartoon Art. The Museum, founded by Beetle Bailey creator Mort Walker, is opening its doors during the first weekend of March.

"The International Museum of Cartoon Art is dedicated to preserving and highlighting comic art, which is a truly original American art form," said Geppi. "We're interested in helping the Museum achieve its goals, and informing visitors about the wonderful world of comics."

The Museum will be honoring Barks with an award designed to commemorate his long and distinguished career. In addition, a variety of works by Carl Barks will be displayed at the Museum during its opening.

"This birthday celebration is the first of many joint ventures sponsored by Diamond International Galleries and the Museum... all to promote important artists," Geppi concluded. "In the future, there will be a variety of special activities designed to draw attention to comic art and the comic book industry."

Actions In New Orleans

One afternoon last February Bill Ponseti, owner of More Fun Comics in New Orleans, received a telephone call from a local woman who claimed to have old comics for sale. Two hours later an attractive woman, sixty-ish, walked in carrying a single box. Matt Nelson and Bill Ponseti pulled out the comics and divided them into two equal stacks.

Bill's stack started with a couple copies of Keen Detective Funnies and then, the More Funs came. Number 14 was first, followed by more pre-hero More Fun. Matt's group began with single digit Actions. The last book in Matt's stack was Action #2

The woman calmly explained that her husband had purchased the comics off the stands as a child. Bill handed her a copy of the Overstreet Golden Age Update and showed the lady how to use it. She eventually agreed to sell.

The average grade of the run was VG, but the mid-grade condition was offset by the rich color and white pages. The collection included Action Comics #1-12 plus sixteen others between #14 and #87, Adventure #61, More Fun #14, plus #15-40 (missing some issues), More Fun #71, Detectives #12, #15-17 plus nine issues between #43 and #102, Funny Picture Stories #1, and a high grade Superman #29. There were 113 total comics in the collection and an additional eight coverless comics. ■

Hitler Cover Query

Congratulations on your continuing fine work on this most worthy publication. I'm writing in response to the Anti-Hitler Comics article by Alan Bartholomew which appeared in CBM #31. I'm sure that you already know that Startling Comics #12 is dated January 1942 not 1947. I also query whether T-Man #6 (July, 1952) should be considered as a Hitler cover since it came out seven years after the end of World War II. If it is, then so should T-Man #34 (April, 1956) which reprints the story in issue #6 but with a different cover featuring the Fuehrer. The reprinted story is interesting in that many of the panels have been re-drawn to remove the graphic violence of the earlier issue. Comparing the two splash panels is like one of those can-you-spot-the-difference contests. Yours very truly,

Gregory A. Wasko, British Columbia, Canada

I'm of the opinion that a Hitler cover is a Hitler cover… regardless of the date of publication… and your info is duly noted. Good to hear from you Greg.

Those Pesky In-between Grades

Greetings and congratulations on maintaining the consistently high quality of Comic Book Marketplace. Circumstances kept me from visiting my favorite comic store for several months. This past weekend I finally made the drive to the Outer Limits in Waltham. Steve Higgins, owner and cornerstone of integrity, had kept my box filled, knowing I would one day return. To my delight he handed me August through January of CBM...all pristine! Imagine a five month run of CBM that has been retained in NM/M condition! Sorry - did I say "NM/M"? That IS a facetious appellation... or is it?

Your November '95 editorial makes a case against Combination Grades. You state "I propose that a comic can either grade as high as possible in the Very Fine range, or as low as possible in the Near Mint range...BUT NOT BOTH." You further contend that "I do support the use of plus signs and minus signs to indicate the upper and lower ends of each grade range."

I can only conclude from this that VF+ represents the upper end of the Very Fine range, and NM- represents the lower end of the Near Mind range, since, as you say, the plus and minus signs "indicate the upper end and lower end of each grade." A bit further on, however, you state, "But Very Fine plus (VF+) is still a distinctly different (and significantly lower) grade than Near Mint minus (NM-)!"

Now controversy begins anew... if VF+ is the upper end of Very Fine, and NM- is the lower end of NM, then what lies between NM- and the "significantly lower" VF+? I have no problem describing that "in between VF+ and NM-" state as VF/NM. To me, VF/NM indicates a book that falls into that significant space lying between VF+ and NM-.

I use a grading system that most dealers and collectors I know at least understand, and often use themselves. The system (from G-NM), in ascending order is G, G+, G/VG, VG-, VG, VG+, VG/F, F-, F, F+, F/VF, VF-, VF, VF+, VF/NM, NM-, NM. This allows 17 grades between Good and Near Mint. In actual practice I find I use the basic grades (GD, VF, F, etc.) about 65% of the time, the combination grades (G/VG, VG.F, etc. approximately 25% of the time and the +/- grades about 10% of the time I do this because I find the combination grades have more accurately reflected the books I have come across than do the +/- grades. Which leads us to the bottom line. The goal of a Grading system is two-fold: to create categories that represent a condition, and to have those categories applied as universally and consistently as possible. We have yet to achieve this simple goal, but the process of getting there is fascinating! Keep stirring up the controversy, Gary. It's the only way we will eventually achieve unity.

Oh, and once more Gary, I do ask...if VF+ is the upper end of Very Fine, and NM- is the lower end of NM, then what lies between NM- and the "significantly lower" VF+?

Michael Spampinato, Massachusetts

Call me stubborn if you will… but I still think "in-between grades" are not very meaningful. I still hold that they attempt to label a line of demarcation between grades as opposed to an actual grade! But regardless, their most negative characteristic to me is that they are often confusing to consumers. And I'll also be the first to acknowledge that this entire topic is all a matter of personal preference and not written in stone. While on the topic of grading, I was excited to learn that our copy editor, Beth Holley (who is also a VP with the San Diego Comic Con) is planning the first national "Comic Book Grading Symposium" which will be held at this year's SD Convention. I think this will be an event a real importance to the hobby and I urge everyone who attends to put the Symposium on their Con schedules! See you there!

(*continued on page 72*)

CREAM OF THE CROP

All Star Comics	33 VG/FN .$325	67 FN/VF .$925	14 VF+ ..$1500
11 VF/NM $2950	47 FN $795	83 VF- ...$450	**Master Comics**
13 VG/FN .$525	54 VF/NM .$900	94 VF/VF+ $680	16 VF $600
27 VG $220	**Blackhawk**	100 VF/NM $1050	17 VF $575
31 VG+ ...$225	15 FN/VF .$250	**Fight Comics**	20 VF+ ...$625
America's Greatest	**Captain America**	**Mile High Copies**	21 VF+ ..$6500
2 VF- $475	4 VF $3950	2 NM ...$2000	22 VF ...$5500
5 VG+ ...$140	6 VF-/VF .$3500	4 NM ...$1260	29 VF $550
Batman	52 VF $825	7 VF/NM ..$700	79 NM ...$170
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29 VF-/VF $575	50 VG/FN .$425	7 VF/NM .$7000	29 NM ...$1170

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Unusual Items

Recently I ran across some unusual items while in Illinois. These items appear to be 12 page coverless Sunday give-a-way comics (no staples). They are all dated 1956. I have 10 of them in surprisingly good condition. They were published in Elgin, Illinois and contain several stories, many with a religious theme. Have you any idea about these things? - scarcity? - demand?

Phil Carpenter, California

There were literally thousands of giveaways like the ones you've mentioned... of historical interest, but regrettably of little collector value, in the opinion of many. The exception to this might be that the book contains work by a high demand artist or writer. Who knows though, maybe yours falls into this category. On a more positive note, I do know of several collectors who specialize in this type of comic, so there is some demand. Good luck and thanks for writing.

Talk It Up

First of all, congratulations on your excellent work on CBM. I seem to enjoy it more each issue - I hope you can keep it up! I talk it up whenever I get the chance, and circulation at my local comic shop has since increased from the one copy ordered for me, to around a dozen copies.

As a side note, I *loved* the Steranko issue, which I could talk about for days, so I won't even start this time. I also really like your article explaining your opinions on the +/- grading system.

Tommy Jasmin, Wisconsin

I Must Have It

I love Comic Book Marketplace! There is always at least one article on a comic that I'm already interested in and even the articles on subjects I'm not familiar with have me interested by the time I'm done. In CBM #32, my favorite was the Strange Worlds article (I have an extensive collection of Tales of Suspense; even now, I'm eagerly awaiting a Tales To Astonish #1 that I ordered from Boyd Rowden of Texas). I also liked the articles about Wertham and the Senate hearings, the Gorgo article, and Michelle Nolan's article in CBM #27 about the misconceptions of the year 1956.

Unfortunately, I sometimes find it a little difficult to find every single issue of CBM. I usually shrug my shoulders and say, "Oh, well", but I heard that CBM #31 has an article on The Yellow Claw... AND I MUST HAVE IT! One of the highlights of my collection is a worn, tape-covered Yellow Claw #4. So please send me CBM #31. I have enclosed a check for $7.50. Thanks a lot and keep up the good work.

I've also got a strange little collection of Erwin Rommel comic book appearances. It's awfully small right now, but I was wondering if you're the least bit interested in an article on this subject (Rommel in the comics) sometime in the future.

Tony Seybert, California

"Rommel In The Comics" has a home... send it along!

Long-Time Favorites

First off, I wanted to let you know what a great magazine you have. It's the very first book I read every month. I'm always astounded by the complexity of the many articles and the hours of work and research they contain. After over 30 years in this hobby, it's nice to find great coverage of my long-time favorites done in such a scholarly manner. Hope things are going well for you, and that 1996 is off to a great start!

Sam Maronie, Missouri

Pedigree Definition

Wanted to throw in my two cents on a variety of topics: (1) Pedigree Books. My definition of "pedigree" refers to a comic book that is in exceptionally high grade and is part of a larger collection of books which share its exceptional qualities (the key word here is "exceptional"). It must be an original owner collection. If it isn't, no matter how beautiful the books are, a given book from the collection will not be characteristic of the other books in the collection due to differences in storage techniques. If a collection doesn't meet these criteria, you can name it anything you want, but it's not a "pedigree" in my book.

(2) "The Comic Room". I loved the idea and the article. Must the books shown be in high grade, or pedigree copies? I hope not, because I have a few under appreciated gems in my modest collection I'd love to show off. My one complaint is that I wouldn't exactly call Adventure #79 "unheralded". The others, however, fit the bill perfectly. Hey, Pat K., I'll trade you a Spawn #1 for that Larson Flash #8, what do you say?

(3)Hitler Covers. Loved 'em! Two that were left out were T-Man #14 (another post-war Hitler cover, although it turns out to be a double, not the real thing) and my favorite Silver Age Hitler cover, Rip Hunter, Time Master #20 (Rip Hunter Hitler's pal? Say it ain't so!).

(4) Rarity. I've been very interested in the debate over rarity of Golden Age comics that I've seen unfolding in the pages of CBM. You, Gary, seem reluctant to open this can of worms, possibly because you believe rarity is just one more thing that will be used to jack up prices of comics and take focus away from the art and story. This might well happen, but I think determining the rarity of Golden Age comics is important nonetheless, because of the "extinction factor".

Knowing that very few copies of a given book exist will influence people who own copies to take extraordinary steps to preserve them. Sure, I know people tend to take pretty good care of Golden Age books as it is, but that extra step can be important. For instance, I ordinarily frown upon restoration. To me, a low grade book is a beautiful thing. But, if I knew for sure that my copy of More Fun #98 (an 8 in Gerber) was one of only twenty copies in existence, I might be persuaded to have it restored or otherwise take steps to lengthen its life span.

Another positive step would be an intensified search for undiscovered copies of rare books, and the documentation of these discoveries, which could push some books "back from the brink" of extinction. The effect of all this would not be felt so much on high-demand books, which are likely to be well protected anyway, but on low-demand titles (say, certain romance books) which may not have hordes of collectors clamoring for them today, but which should nonetheless survive for future generations to appreciate.

I feel that collector interest in rarity is at an all-time high, and I hope we'll see that reflected in serious attempts to determine approximately how many copies of given books exist.

Dr. Pat Kochanek's series in early issues of CBM were a great example of the type of articles I'd like to see (in fact I only saw the one on Adventure, so I'd love to see the whole series reprinted). More recent articles on rarity of Silver Age Marvels seem pointless unless you confine your survey to high grade issues.

(5) Finally, I was extremely saddened to read of L.B. Cole's death in you latest issue. I loved the interview you had with Mr. Cole in #30, but I was upset to discover that he didn't own a single copy of any of the comics he'd worked on. I have a copy of Young King Cole Vol. 3 #7 (cover and interior art by Cole) which I wanted to give to Mr. Cole, as I felt it was a shame that such a talented and prolific artist didn't have access to his own work. I'm sorry to learn I was too late. But I would appreciate it if you would forward the book (enclosed) to Mr. Cole's family, along with my deepest sympathies. We've lost a great man. Sincerely,

Chris Gage, California

Susan Naiman has forwarded the book to Ellen Cole and family... Your gesture is greatly appreciated, Chris

Mylar Question

Thoroughly enjoyed "The Pedigree Puzzle" by Matt Nelson, I love hearing the history of these collections. These are the kind of finds collectors dream of and hearing how they surfaced is a real treat. I hope this is the beginning of a series of articles by Mr. Nelson., please tell me he'll do this with all of the collections he mentions at the end of his article in CBM #32. I look forward to each new issue, keep up the good work!

On a another note, I have a question, maybe you can answer... the largest Mylar sleeves I can find advertised are magazine size (9 1/2 by 12 inches)...I have a copy of New Fun that is (10 by 15 inches), I can't find anything large enough to store it in. Can you help? Thanks,

Roger Taylor, West Virginia

I know that Jef Hinds at the Comic Conservation Lab can make any size mylar you need, and he has great service! You can contact him at (608) 277-8750

Mile High Surprise

I was rather surprised to read in Patrick Kochanek's article on the Lamont Larson Collection (CBM #32) that Adventure Comics #'s 54, 57, and 62 were not included in the Edgar Church (Mile High) collection. I have owned the Church copies of those three books since 1982.

A small number of comics from the Church collection were auctioned by Collectors Book Store in Hollywood, California between August and November 1982. Included were the three copies of Adventure Comics which I purchased, as well as the Church copies of Action Comics #'s 21, 49, 62 and 64. Although they were not identified as Mile High copies, there is absolutely no question that they were from the collection. I am enclosing photocopies of the Adventure Comics, on which you can see the pencil distribution codes.

I have also been meaning to write to you since I read in CBM #24 that the Church copy of Exciting Comics #28 could not be located. I bought that comic directly from Chuck Rosanski at a San Diego Comic Convention in the early 80's. By that time most of the Mile High books from the major publishers had been dispersed, but Chuck still had many bins full of the less popular titles. I picked out the Exciting #28 simply because of its great Schomburg cover.

It is impossible to know the entire scope of the Church collection from merely looking at the original Mile High sales lists or talking to those collectors who today hold major portions of the collection. Important parts of the collection, including the first 21 issues of Action Comics, Flash Comics #'s 1 through 10, Detective Comics #'s 27 through 37, almost half of the All-Star Comics, and many early Adventure Comics, were never included in the original sales lists. Moreover, despite high prices of the Mile High books, even in 1977, there were undoubtedly a significant number of early sales, based solely on the incredible condition of the comics, long before anyone even considered the provenance of comic books.

I personally bought comics directly from Chuck Rosanski as early as 1977 (including the Church copy of All-American #25), and I know of other long-term collectors who did the same. It should not be assumed that Church copies do not exist simply because all of the early buyers either cannot be located or choose to remain anonymous.

Craig W. Englund, California

Your points are well taken, Craig. It's just more support for the national registry of Edgar Church copies that is administered by Dr. Pat Kochanek under the auspices of the American Association of Comichook Collectors. Any CBM reader who is not yet a member can contact the AACC at (619) 698-6666 or write them at P. O. Box 151029, San Diego, CA 92175-1029.

(Continued on page 74)

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Nightstand Issues

Gary, it has only been in the past 5 months that I started reading Comic Book Marketplace. The topics written about are highly informative, fun, and addicting. Reading the letter page a few months back, a letter was written about an article you had published in an older issue concerning the Silver Age Flash. I knew I had to have that issue of CBM. Having read the last 5 or 6 issues I realized all the great stuff I must of missed in earlier issues. I called you on the phone and asked if all the back issues were available. You said they were, however there were a limited number of some of the issues. I said I'd buy them, and they were here in less than a week. I couldn't wait to start reading them, and placed the pile on my night stand. I started reading an issue one that very night. Reading about these past treasures brought back so many memories from my childhood that I had forgotten. Thank you for giving me back these memories. Sincerely,

Rob Weinberg, Ohio

Every Issue

I'm still receiving Comic Book Marketplace quite regularly and enjoying every issue. I hope that when the subscription is about to run out that you'll let me know. Yours,

Steven Fears, Oklahoma

Cap Index

Thought I'd drop you a line congratulating the entire CBM staff on the top notch job you're doing servicing the Golden Age and Silver Age collecting community. A monthly fanzine targeting this diverse group of collectors is a must in today's marketplace. As I explained to you during our recent phone conversation, I've been slowly putting together a synopsis of each issue of the Captain America Comics run for my personal use. I haven't completed the entire run yet, I figure I'll keep plugging away at it and expect to finish the issues I have available (1-60) in the next couple of months. Generally, I've included such things as cover action description, date, artist (if known), story synopses and even some text story synopses for a few issues that contained them. You indicated that you felt CBM readers would be interested in seeing the fruits of my labor in the magazine. If such an article would be of service to the collecting community I'd be willing to put something together. I thought I'd write in with this offer and see what the response from the readers would be. Let me know. Regards,

Charles Mazza, Quebec, Canada

And what a diverse group they are! I am continually amazed at the incredible cross-section of income levels, collecting interest, and geographic locations found in our hobby. Your checklist sounds like a great idea to me… what do you think Cap fans?

Combination Grades & Reprints

Just a quick note here to throw in my two cents worth on the Great Grading Debate: count me in as one of the supporters of "combined" grades ..I love 'em, especially VG/FN's.

As the Overstreet Guide continues to slacken the criteria for Very Good, there is a hole developing between VG and Fine.

Nowadays, a VG can be a pretty ratty book if you go strictly by the guide. This is distressing to me because I've always been happy with nice VG's (put 'em in 4 mil Mylar, hold 'em at arm's length and they should look near fine). Mainly, I hate large creases. .now (supposedly) allowed in grade

Unless we degrade the criteria for FINE (heresy!), there's going to be a substantial Twilight Zone between VG and Fine.

For me, "combination" grades are practical, accurate, and, most important of all, very helpful when buying books through the mail. True, the Overstreet "numbering" system (e.g.: "VF88") is more accurate, but how many of us have the time or expertise to use it?

Actually, this whole debate is besides the point... combination grades have been around for at least 25 years and are here to stay! But it's still fun to discuss it. In fact, the reader's mailbag is my favorite part of CBM. You could print twenty pages of letters every month and I'd read every bit of them!

To change the subject, here's an idea for a CBM article: How about a checklist of DC and Marvel Golden Age reprints? You know, stuff like the 25¢ MARVEL TALES, etc., Batman Annuals, JIMMY OLSEN'S with Newsboy Legion, etc., etc...100 page spectaculars...

There are a whole lot of collectors out here who, like me, can't afford a MORE FUN #55

with the covers still on it but still love great Golden Age art. Believe it or not, the market for these reprints is heating up!

If you do consider such a list, remember that it would be most helpful if you noted specific contents of each book, at least as much as practical.

On yet a third topic, I noticed that the sub price of CBM is going up a buck a copy. I was wondering when this would happen! Those new "thick" covers and glossy guts have got to be expensive. However, please be aware that we readers would be happy with a simple thermo-stenciled mimeographed fanzine, if it comes down to a CBM or no CBM. The hobby needs it!

P.S. - I noticed the MORT MESKIN obituary in a recent issue of Comics Buyers Guide... it didn't even have one panel of his art. Any chance you could do five or six pages on his career? Meskin was one of the top Golden Age artists (ask Alex Toth) and deserves some recognition. He was awesome! Maybe you could do a big interview with George "Inky" Roussos, who inked much of his best work... There are a lot of good anecdotes floating around out there. Besides being amazingly gifted, Meskin was a nut! Please do us all a big favor...

Just "Keeping in Touch", Best Regards,
Dan Fleming, Kansas

Thanks for writing, Dan, it was good to hear from you again. (1) At this writing, I still don't think combination grades are an advantage to collectors/consumers in any way, but I'm trying to keep an open mind. (2) Two CBM contributors are preparing a series on inexpensive reprints even as we speak. (3) The "thicker cover on CBM #29 was a one-time Freebie from the printer. The increased cover price was not a function of upgrading the cover stock but was an essential step to ensure continued publication of CBM. Your loyalty to CBM is much appreciated. (4) Regarding Mort Meskin... yet another (sigh) great has fallen! I only hope someone out can write a retrospective of his work for CBM... Mort's contribution to comic book history could fill a book, and I was very sorry to hear of his passing...

French Buscema Fan

This fax is to tell you how much I love your magazine. I have to say that in the world of today's comics, I don't feel so enthusiastic. I think it's more a world of money... than passion and real entertainment. Even your little brother, FAN, seems to look a little too much like Wizard or Hero Illustrated for me. It seems to me they sacrifice to fashion to grab young people. I am not sure... they explain why some art is good (anatomy, background, and story telling) and some not really. Same thing for story... even if this is supposed to be for kids, it doesn't have to be filled (sometimes) with unnecessary violence, or what's to be hot and expensive one month later

I don't think these three mags are as "cool" as they say (is there another adjective in the vocabulary of today?), of course I may be wrong, possibly because I am older... Anyway, I think we have to use our brain and not let anybody think for us, even when it comes to comic books. Get information about story and art, and then think (by ourselves) and then decide what we feel about it.

In France, the economic situation is not helping the market. A lot of kids buy today's comics and the older collectors (between 30 and 40 years old) have some difficulties buying rare and expensive items. Usually they buy them through the mail. . directly from a US dealer and fortunately the present currency rate of the dollar is good for us.

As a 39 year old collector who began in 1970, I have to tell you again that your magazine is made of gold for all the information it gives. Such treasure could be collected in a book.

What about a compilation of this information sorted by company, title, issue number, writer and artist, cover artist, and of course title of stories, characters?

I know it is a lot of work but with a computer you can keep a lot of information and maybe it could be useful to stock this in a CD ROM or hard disk to search and find quickly - for example, who drew what or what was drawn or written by somebody? I can imagine that there would be a lot of people interested in such material in paper or computer form.

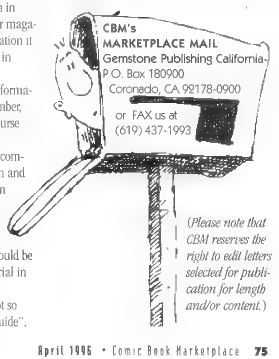
The "Comic Book Collector" was not so bad, but like the "Comic Book Price Guide", it's more a price guide than a complete information guide. I have to say they both contain errors even for recent (1960-1970) Marvel books. I think it could be more like the "Marvel Comics Index" published by George Olshevsky.

By the way, as one of the biggest fans of John Buscema, I would like to get some information about the first story he drew. In the Marvel book, Les Daniel spoke about a True Crime story called "They Stole the Lincoln Grave". Is there any CBM reader who knows the title and issue number of the comic containing this story? And if somebody can give me a complete bibliography of what John drew before he returned to Marvel in 1966, I would be very grateful.

Thank you again and keep up the great work. CBM #28 on Jim Steranko was marvelous... including the checklist.

Michel Maillot, France

Thanks for your correspondence Michel. I know everyone at Gemstone (including our "little brother" FAN) appreciates your thoughtful feedback and will take it to heart. Please tell other French Gemstone readers that we appreciate their support. Perhaps we could get some of them (or you) to write an article on French collectors and dealers for future publication. Vive Le Comic Collecting! (Pardon my French) If you'd care to write, send your letters to:



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HERE'S WHAT I THINK!

THOMAS ANDRAE
A tribute to Jerry Siegel

A hero of mine died a few days ago. His name was Jerry Siegel. Many will write tributes about him and rightfully so. They will say that he created one of the most famous and popular fictional heroes of all time. They will write that his invention of Superman gave comics its first distinctive character and was the catalyst which launched the entire comics industry. All this is true and much more.

But, to really comprehend Siegel's genius and to understand Superman's enormous initial popularity one has to understand Siegel's inspiration for the character The Depression had produced a mood of profound pessimism and futility as an army of the unemployed stood idly in bread lines. Gangsters and corruption were rife. In Europe another depression spawned the dictatorships of Mussolini and Hitler, unleashing the destructive forces which would lead to World War II.

The times called for great heroes, someone or something to believe in. Siegel, and his collaborator Joe Shuster, were just eighteen-year old high school kids when Siegel first had his inspiration for Superman. Siegel explained it in these words: "Listening to Roosevelt's 'fireside chats'...being unemployed and worned during the Depression and feeling hopelessness and fear, hearing and reading of the oppression and slaughter of helpless Jews in Nazi Germany...seeing movies depicting the horrors of privation suffered by the downtrodden...reading of gallant, crusading heroes in the pulps...and on the screen...I had the urge to help somehow...Superman was the answer, Superman aiding the downtrodden and oppressed."

Superman was a hero made for the times, but Siegel and Shuster had to endure heartbreaking rejection after rejection before their dreams of seeing Superman published came true. The budding cartoonists thought they had it made when a comics publisher offered to print their creating. But the publisher reneged on their offer. Dejected, Shuster tore up all the art for what would have been the first Superman comic book story. Only the cover survived, rescued from the fireplace by Siegel. Siegel had to stay at his job as a delivery boy and Shuster was forced to take work carrying boxes and selling ice cream on the street. He was so poor he had to draw on wall paper and the backs of calendars.

But they never abandoned their dreams and

in 1934 Siegel tried a new format, a Superman newspaper comic strip. These strips would later be cut-up and reassembled to form the first Superman story in Action Comics #1. Again the tenor of the times sparked Siegel's imagination. The economic and political malaise of the early thirties fostered doomsday fantasies about the demise of civilization and the destruction of the Earth. The first Flash Gordon Sunday page depicted the earth man's journey to the planet Mongo to save an Earth imperiled from destruction at the hands of Ming the Merciless, a mad dictator very like those feared at the time. Reversing the usual formula, Siegel made Superman a visitor from another planet who rocketed to Earth seconds before the destruction of his native planet Krypton.

It was an inspired idea and gave Siegel's new creation a realism that other science fiction strips lacked. In the first couple of years of the strip, stories were not set on some distant planet, parallel universe, or in the remote future, but in the contemporary world of a late thirties America, just coming out of a long, debilitating depression and about to enter an unsettling world war. While the Man of Steel possessed superhuman powers everybody else was quite normal and ordinary. These tales revealed a fascination with wish fulfillment and asked readers to imagine what they could do about the real world they knew if they possessed the tremendous powers of a superman.

Siegel's answer was clear: battling social injustice and aiding "the helpless and oppressed". Rather than fighting mad scientists or even garden variety crooks, the early Superman fought real-life social ills. Siegel's favorite Superman story, for example, was about Superman's exposure of unsafe working conditions in a coal mine caused by the owner's greed and neglect. Superman teaches the owner and a group of his spoiled, affluent friends, who go on a slumming party to the mines, to appreciate the workers' plight by causing a cave-in and forcing them to experience the dangers the miners had to endure. Superman clears a path to freedom only after the owner promises to make his mine safe.

Idealistic, brash, and totally self-confident, Superman's use of bold action to solve pressing social evils offered a potent antidote to the despair and inertia fostered by the times. And it sold comics. When a poll in Action Comics' fourth issue, to discover readers' favorite character, revealed that Superman had been responsible for selling out issues. The publishers would emblazon his picture on every succeeding issue.

The rest is history. A legion of imitators would follow, transforming the fledgling comic book business into a multi-million dollar industry. But for millions of readers Superman would have a more deeply personal meaning: he would evoke the tremendous powers which we, the

Clark Kents of the world, might possess with a simple change of costume, or the flick of a page. It is a message worth repeating in these times of postmodern cynicism.

¬Thanks Jerry for all you've given us, but most of all for keeping our dreams alive. Rest in peace.

SCOTTY MOORE
A grade is a grade is a grade!

Here's an opinion on the pedigree issue: The concept of a "pedigree" for comic books strikes me as rather odd and totally superfluous. The scientific necessity for the concept of pedigree is to be able to predict characteristics in the later life of animals, or for offspring of same, that are not necessarily apparent in the animal (or parents) at the present time. This is hardly a necessity with comic books. Since comic books, when properly stored, are essentially steady-state objects, a thorough inspection will reveal all characteristics of that book for both now and in the future.

In the light of such an inspection, a "pedigree" provides no added value. Therefore, the operative reason for such an concept is psychological, to boost the owner's ego or to validate one's choice in one book over another. While the marketplace may place monetary value to such concerns, with regards to the true issue of condition the concept of pedigree has no place. A grade is a grade is a grade, and anyone who pays one cent more for a book of equivalent grade, over another, because of it's "pedigree" is buying the sizzle as well as the steak, and taking themselves for a ride in the bargain.

MICHELLE NOLAN
The Personal Pedigree

The "Pedigree Issue" of CBM was fun. It's always enjoyable to read about the great finds in comic collecting history. However, I believe most collectors really don't care much if the comics they are looking for are pedigree books; they just want the comics. That's how I feel. Collectors with a very narrow focus, such as one title or one character, may be more interested in pedigrees than most, and certainly the wealthy collectors and investors are intrigued by pedigree books. And, of course, it's fun to own at least a couple of historic pedigree books such as the Mile High issues.

In general, though, I'd rather have an affordable copy than a pedigree copy. A pedigree obviously adds to the mystique, but, as a longtime collector, I just want any given affordable comic as part of the larger goal of completing a character, title run, company, or genre. Recently I traded a Mohawk Valley book to another longtime collector, simply because he needed that number and I needed an issue he had. It didn't matter one whit to me that one book was a pedigree book, and the other was not.

So, pedigrees don't matter much to me. However, I believe all longtime collectors have their own "personal pedigree" stories to tell, even if the books aren't part of a recognized pedigree collection.

For example, back in the mid-1960s, Phil Seuling acquired many of the comics from the files of the famed Fawcett, DC and science-fiction writer Otto Binder. Binder signed the books and initialed the stories he had written. Phil listed and sold the comics as "Binder books" and priced them slightly higher than usual, though not much higher. I bought several of them, including a gorgeous near-mint Mary Marvel #2 for (as I recall) the princely sum of $10! I can't remember how many books were involved, but surely these would qualify as pedigrees of a sort!

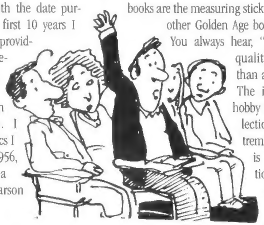
Then there was the fabulous find in the early 1960s of an enterprising Oakland teenager, Barry Bauman. He discovered several thousand Golden Age comics, many of them in beautiful condition, at a bookstore in the Sacramento area. As I recall, he purchased them for something like 40 cents apiece, though the total number of comics was high enough that this represented a considerable financial outlay in those days. Many, if not most and maybe all, of the books had a "Liberty Book Store" sticker attached, though in many cases this sticker came off and did not damage the book. In a few cases, the sticker could not be removed without marring the cover. I'm not sure if that was the store where Barry discovered them, or if they had come from another store originally.

At any rate, Barry and his buddies put on perhaps the first West Coast comic "convention" — an Oakland gathering of a few dozen collectors in January, 1966 — and showed a 16mm print of the "Captain America" serial on a garage wall! I still have the "program" and most of the several dozen comics I purchased at that convention. Afterwards, Barry, then a high school senior, invited a few of his newfound friends to visit his family's home nearby in Oakland, where we were absolutely stunned to see these thousands of beautiful Golden Age comics in his attic! Many of these were the "Liberty Book Store" treasure trove! Naturally, I bought several dozen of them — mostly at $1 or $2 apiece — and I remember getting a fine copy of Superman #4 from Barry in trade for my fine copy of Action Comics #13 (purchased in 1965 at an antique store for $10, which resulted in an outburst of utter amazement from my father, who thought it was the financial folly of all time!). For the next two or three years, Bud Plant, myself and several other collectors would make periodic pilgrimages in my old Chevrolet to visit Barry's attic, where we would wheel and deal and spend the then huge sums of $50 or $100 in one day on old comic books! To me, those will always be "pedigree" comics, even though they'll never be recognized as such.

Long before that, I discovered a "personal pedigree" collection of maybe 200 DC super hero comics from the 1948-53 period, sitting in stacks during a visit circa 1958 to a used book store in San Jose that I scoured almost every Saturday morning as a 10-year old! Most of the DCs were in at least what we today call "very good" and many were "very fine". That store sold used comics for a nickel — six for a quarter — or traded any two comics, two-for-one.

Well, I bought what I could and promptly took the next bus three miles back home. I begged as much money as I could from anyone I could find. I broke my piggy bank! And I also begged every kid in the neighborhood for used comics, saying I would soon replace them. I made it back to that used book store (now, alas, a parking lot!) just before it closed, carrying two bags of comics and about $4 or $5 in cold cash! I scooped up that lot of DCs as though they were the treasures of the Incas! Even then, I thought I was pulling a fast one by trading two copies of "Treasure Chest" for a 1950 Batman! Eventually, I traded off some of those DCs, but I still have many of them, including All-Star #57, Green Lantern #35, Adventure #126 and — prize of prizes! — Superboy #1!

See what I mean by "personal pedigrees"?? The ultimate in "personal pedigree" stories, however, occurred beginning in 1989, when I purchased a 1960 Cave Carson issue of Brave & the Bold from a dealer friend at a Sunday convention. While going through my comics after arriving home, that book seemed strangely different to me — it almost tingled! When I opened it, I was utterly astonished to see my 12-year-old signature at the top! (I signed all of my comics in ink, with the date purchased, for about the first 10 years I bought them, thereby providing a personal provenance but removing them from the near-mint classification without a thought!). I saved most of the comics I bought beginning in 1956, but I did trade away a few. I guess Cave Carson wasn't one of my favorites at the time!



Anyway, after 29 years, the book had returned to me! Amazing!

That was the first such instance, but not the last. Four years later, Terry Stroud, the well-known Southern California dealer who has found so many wonderful comics over the years, came up to me with a huge grin at the San Diego Con and insisted he had a book I would not be able to pass up! Sure enough, he had a 1959 Batman #125 and a 1960 Rip Hunter Showcase #26 originally purchased by me and signed, lo those many years ago! Even though I already had both books in my collection, how could I pass these up? Talk about high-pressure salesmanship! How could anyone resist? Terry said they came from someone I had never heard of, so apparently those books had really made the rounds! Amazing! Talk about "personal pedigrees"!

To make it even more embarrassing, Terry had detected a snotty comment written on an inside page by a 12-year-old-know-it-all (me) regarding some scientific error that DC had made in a filler short! Now I really had to buy the book!

Then there is the copy of All-Star #21, a gift from Julius Schwartz during a visit to DC circa 1968! It was sitting on his desk, and when I admired it, he just gave it to me! If this isn't a "personal pedigree", I don't know what is!

What are your "personal pedigrees"? I'll bet there are a million of them out there!

PAUL STEFANOWICZ
Is that a double pedigree??

There are only a few select collections that have surfaced which I would call "Pedigrees". Certainly, the Edgar Church collection is the major one. These books are the measuring stick by which many other Golden Age books are judged. You always hear, "like Mile High quality", or "Better than a Church copy". The impact on our hobby by that one collection has been tremendous. It also is a deep collection and very consistent in its high grade...a true rarity.

I would also call the Larson books pedigree, due to their consistent beauty, as well as the story behind them. The San Francisco books are also spectacular.

I agree with Jon Berk that many of today's "pedigrees" are simply "name collections". The IRS collection has a fascinating story behind it, but the books were rounded up from everywhere, and the quality just isn't there. Bob Overstreet accumulated a fantastic collection (which included some pedigrees), but I don't believe his was a pedigree collection. The mass of Mr. Overstreet's collection, along with the event of its "unleashing" makes it one of the truly great "name collections".

In closing, I feel that a pedigree collection should come largely from one primary source, and be of consistent high grade. There may of course be a few exceptions in grade, but pedigree collections should be special, as well as memorable in content.

PS. I'm just wondering, if Overstreet's collection were considered "pedigree", what would the pedigree books in his collection be called? Would they be called Pennsylvania/Overstreet copies? How about Overstreet/ White Mountain books? Would the comics be "Double Pedigree"??

DAVID CUMMINGS
2¢ worth on grading

Here's my two cents on the grading controversy: Any grading system is only as good and as honest as the person using it. A standard system must be accepted to avoid the current system of every dealer having his own, and many convention dealers not grading books at all!

As far as these recent "bastard" grades that assign a range such as "GD+/VG"... what is that?! When grading, assign a grade... NOT A RANGE of grades that the book MIGHT be. When a grade is listed as VG/FN that should be a book that is being assigned a specific grade that is halfway between Very Good and Fine... not a grade somewhere in-between.

The current seven point grading system works fine as long as the person doing the grading can do it objectively and consistently.

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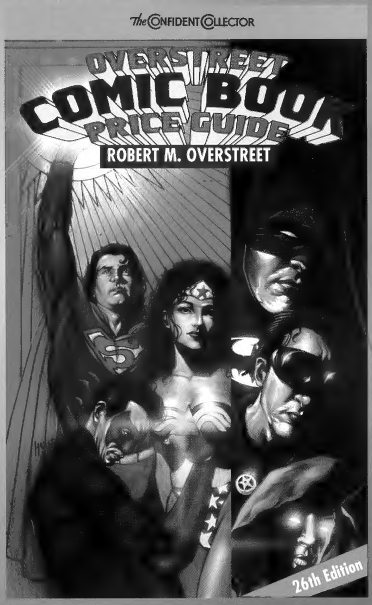

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